

# Foot Notes

Spring 2009

## SOLEDOC THOUGHTS

### EVERYTHING LOOKS BETTER IN SPRING



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I don't know about most of you, but a few of you have expressed your worries and concerns over the financial-world crisis and what it means in your own lives.

It is the same for all of us. Expenses are metered while worries seem to thrive. What will happen? We all want to know. Everyone is checking his or her financial pulse.

I look at this entire crisis as an opportunity to recommit to enjoying each day. Planning small trips and eating out occasionally so our favorite restaurant will be there next year. I look at how I might reduce costs to save patients money. I look at my job as enabling. I am here to help you achieve whatever goal you decide. It may be pain relief, cosmetic, or returning to the track or court. Usually it takes

money, and after using a little creativity, expenses can be cut without compromising care. We will all make it through this period of difficulty.

It will change us permanently.

It will take several years, and most of us will recalculate our financial goals. Expectations may have to be lowered.

Will the great stimulus plan work? Absolutely no one can say. What we do know about is the "placebo effect."

Patients get better with benign tablets because they believe they will work.

That is the hope of our current leadership, that people will believe and start doing. It is the largest gamble on "placebo effect" in our lifetime. It's worked before and if we buckle up, it will work again. Buy something, just buy less and avoid analysis paralysis. With the world in a major recession, we are still in the best country to survive these tough times, especially in spring.

*Donald W. Orminski, D.P.M.*

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*Thank you for all your referrals. We appreciate them!*

# WHAT'S YOUR TYPE?

When it comes to your feet, you need to know more than just your shoe size. You should also know what type of arches you have. The arch is the gap between the sole of the foot and the ground that appears when you are standing.

Just like the feet themselves, arches come in all shapes and sizes. For simplicity's sake, podiatrists put them in three main categories: high, medium, and low. You can do a simple test at home to determine which type of arch you have. All you need is a small pan of water and a paper bag or sturdy piece of blank paper.

To start, lay the pan of water and the piece of paper flat on the floor. Dip your bare feet into the water, and shake off the excess. Then step directly onto the

paper so that your footprints appear.

If half of your arches show on the paper, you have medium arches. These are the most common kind of arches and require no treatment or corrective measures. If you can see your entire footprints, you have low arches (also called flat feet). This could



lead to injuries or lower-leg pain in the future, so keep a close eye on your foot health and consider wearing a pair of insoles, which can absorb shock and reduce foot fatigue.

If you see the bottoms and tops of your feet with just a thin outer line connecting the two, you likely have high arches. This is the least common type of arch and can cause excess shock to travel up your legs when you walk or run. If you have high arches, be sure to choose footwear with added arch support to avoid injury.

No matter what kind of arches you have, you should never try to correct foot pain on your own. It could be a sign of a bigger problem. Schedule an appointment with us to make sure your feet feel as good as possible.



# HAMMER TIME

Need a good reason to wear comfortable shoes? Here's one: hammertoe. This deformity causes the toe to bend at the middle joint so that it resembles a hammer. If left untreated, it may require surgery.

Hammertoe can result when a toe is bent for a long period, which causes the muscles to tighten. Some people are born with it. Diabetic nerve damage may also be the cause. In all cases, the condition can lead to foot pain, calluses, and difficulty walking.

If you suspect you have hammertoe, schedule an appointment with us. If your case is mild, we may suggest splinting the affected toe until the muscle relaxes into its normal position. A corn or felt pad can protect the protruding joint from further corns and calluses. You may also need to wear wide-toe-box shoes for a while to reduce aggravating the hammertoe.

**This condition can lead to foot pain, calluses, and difficulty walking. If you suspect you have hammertoe, schedule an appointment with us.**

In severe cases, surgery may be required to straighten the joint. This is usually done on an outpatient basis with local anesthesia. Surgery could involve cutting tendons or fusing the toe's joints together; treatment depends on the situation.

To prevent hammertoe, always wear shoes that are at least one-half inch longer than your longest toe. Avoid shoes that are too narrow, and never wear high heels for more than a few hours at a time.

A little exercise can help keep your toes healthy. The next time you watch TV, practice crumpling a paper towel with your toes. Then, try to pick it up and straighten it out. You may feel silly, but you'll be doing your feet a favor.

# PREGNANCY AND THE FEET



## SESAMOIDITIS

If you have pain in the ball of your foot, you could be suffering from sesamoiditis. Despite its foreign-sounding name, sesamoiditis is a common foot affliction, particularly in young people who engage in

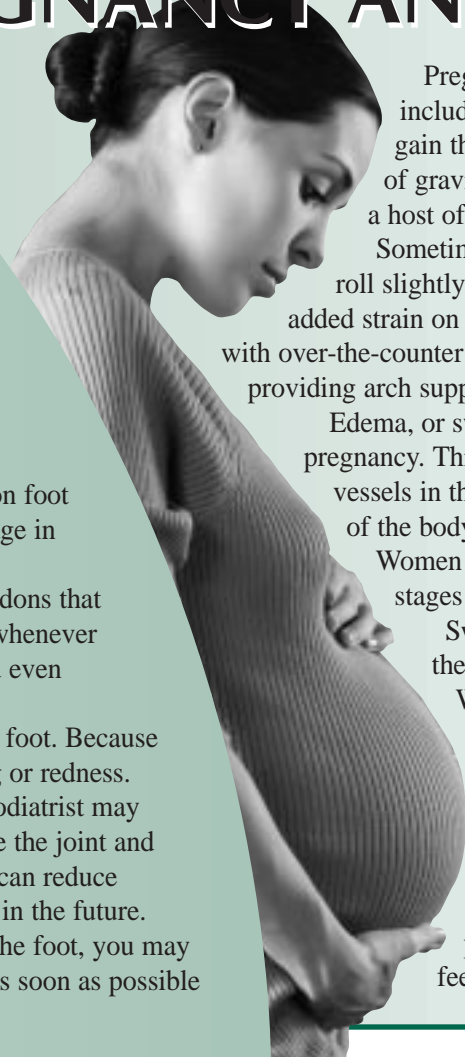
activities that are demanding on the feet, such as basketball and ballet.

Sesamoiditis is named after the sesamoid bones, located within the tendons that run to the big toe. Together, the bones and tendons act as a tiny fulcrum whenever you push off with your big toe. Over time, they can become inflamed and even fractured.

The condition usually starts gradually, with mild pain at the ball of the foot. Because the stress occurs within the foot, it's unlikely you will notice any bruising or redness.

Most mild cases of sesamoiditis can be treated with rest alone. Your podiatrist may also recommend that you bind the big toe with athletic tape to immobilize the joint and allow healing to occur. Wearing a special pad or cushion within the shoe can reduce pressure to the afflicted area and decrease the risk of getting sesamoiditis in the future.

If you experience intense pain and substantial swelling at the front of the foot, you may have a sesamoid fracture. Schedule an appointment with your podiatrist as soon as possible to identify the cause of the pain and ensure a successful recovery.



Pregnancy triggers a number of changes throughout the body—including the feet. Most foot problems stem from the natural weight gain that occurs during pregnancy, which can alter a woman's center of gravity and add pressure to the knees and feet. This often leads to a host of problems, including swelling, cramping, aches, and pains.

Sometimes the arches flatten during load bearing and cause the feet to roll slightly inward. This common ailment, called overpronation, creates added strain on the feet, calves, and back. Comfortable athletic shoes fitted with over-the-counter orthotics can correct the problem by absorbing shock and providing arch support.

Edema, or swelling of the feet, is another common condition during pregnancy. This occurs when the growing uterus puts pressure on the blood vessels in the pelvis and legs, causing blood to gather in the lower half of the body. Feet become sore and sometimes take on a purple hue.

Women may find that they need a larger shoe size during the later stages of pregnancy.

Swelling can be minimized in a number of ways. Elevating the feet is one option, and it can be done as often as needed.

Women should wear loose-fitting footwear that does not constrict circulation. Doctors also recommend walking regularly and avoiding foods high in salt, which can increase fluid retention.

If any of these problems are accompanied by persistent pain or swelling in the hands or face, it could be a sign of a larger problem. In this situation, see a doctor as soon as possible. If you have any questions or concerns about your feet during pregnancy, call us to schedule an appointment.

# LITTLE FEET

An infant's feet start out small. But by the end of the first year, they will grow to reach nearly half their adult size. During this time, it's essential for parents to practice good foot care.

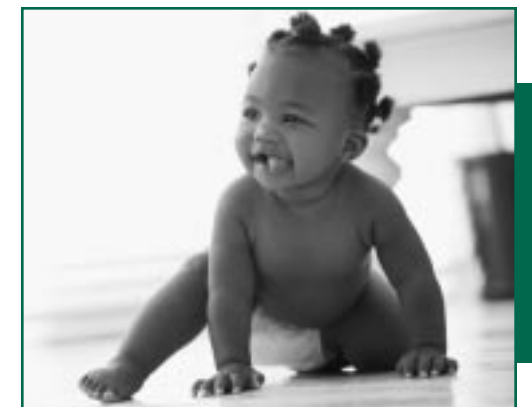
Take a careful look at your baby's feet. Loose joint connections and baby fat will likely cause them to appear flat. This is normal and should resolve itself by the time your child turns two or three years old. Your infant's legs may rotate inward, giving him or her a bowlegged look. This, too, is normal.

When going out, cover your baby's feet loosely. Tight footwear restricts normal movement, which can ultimately retard muscle growth and cause deformities. Let your baby go barefoot when the temperature permits, and give him or her lots of opportunities to exercise the feet. Kicking and other movements prepare the legs for weight bearing.

Children start walking anywhere from 10 to 18 months old. When your baby

starts, allow him or her to go barefoot as often as possible. This encourages the muscles to develop strength and helps the toes grasp the surface. When walking outdoors, flexible footwear may be necessary. Make sure you buy your baby's shoes from a reputable dealer who can take measurements to determine the perfect size. These measurements should be taken every two to four months to ensure a proper fit.

If you follow these simple tips, your infant's feet will be able to carry him or her through a long, healthy lifetime.



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*Here's your foot and  
ankle care newsletter!*

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## STARTING FROM SCRATCH

Itchy feet can drive a person crazy. They strike without warning, usually at the most inopportune moments: during an important business meeting, for example, or behind the wheel. What's a person to do?

It depends on the cause. The three most common causes of foot itch are:

- Athlete's foot
- Contact dermatitis
- Dry skin

Athlete's foot is a fungal infection that usually starts between the toes, then spreads to the soles and the sides of the feet. It's caused by a fungus that infects the superficial layers of the skin. While the fungus thrives in damp environments, it can be picked up from rugs, sheets, clothes—even pets.

Symptoms of athlete's foot include not only itching, but thick, ragged nails, cracking and peeling skin, excessive dryness, and blisters. Mild conditions can be treated with a nonprescription antifungal. Severe cases may require an oral medication.

If your feet are covered in a red, itchy rash, you may be suffering from contact dermatitis. This means that something has irritated and inflamed the skin. Successful treatment consists of identifying the cause of inflammation. Have you started using a new soap, wearing a new piece of jewelry, or had contact with weeds such as poison ivy or poison oak? If so, you may have found your culprit.

In most cases of contact dermatitis, the skin heals on its own within two or three weeks. Hydrocortisone cream can relieve the itching while you heal. Seek medical treatment if you suspect your skin is infected, or if you've tried home remedies without success.

Dry skin can also cause your feet to itch, but it's often hard to distinguish from athlete's foot—and adding moisture could exacerbate your symptoms. Before slathering your feet with lotion, call our office for a recommendation for treatment, or to schedule an appointment.

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### Enjoy the Season's Best

