

Footcare Advice

Maintaining good foot care and hygiene is important. It is essential that you pay attention to the skin of the feet and your toe nails. If you have 'problem feet' such as thickened, misshapen or difficult to cut toenails, or significant hard skin, you should regularly see a podiatrist (Chiropodist). Before making an appointment make sure that the Podiatrist is registered with the 'Health Professions Council'; sometimes they are listed as 'HPC Registered'.

When caring for your feet at home the following information may be of some help:

Examining the feet, hosiery and shoes

Examine your feet every day and cover any breaks in the skin or areas developing redness with a dry sterile dressing. Let a health care provider e.g. nurse, podiatrist or doctor know about the break in the skin as soon as possible.

Wear clean socks every day. Seamless socks are best as they are less likely to cause pressure marks to the toes. If you use socks with seams, it is good practice to wear them inside-out preventing the seam from being in direct contact with the toes.

Before you put your shoes on check that nothing has fallen inside them that may cause damage to the feet e.g. stones and coins etc.

Washing the feet

Wash your feet every day with a mild soap along with a wash cloth kept for use on the feet. If the skin tends to build-up in patches, e.g. around the nails and sole of the foot, try using an 'exfoliating cloth' or 'exfoliating gloves' when washing your feet. You should wash your feet thoroughly paying particular attention to the spaces between all the toes. (Never 'steep' or soak you feet as this causes damage in the long term). After washing, rinse your feet and dry well with a clean towel; again paying particular attention between the toes.

Cutting toe nails

Nails, that don't need to be tended to by a podiatrist, should be cut after bathing. Nail clippers made for this purpose are best. The nails should be cut following the contour of the end of each toe. They should never be cut shorter than the two small channels that they sit in; they are seen at the side of each nail. Ideally, after cutting your nails, use an emery board to remove any rough edges that can tear the nail when socks are put on.

Care of the skin of the feet

If the skin of your feet is dry it is worthwhile applying an emollient cream such as E45. The best time to do so is just after bathing and drying the feet. Rub the cream in well and avoid applying it between the toes at all times. Immediately after applying the cream put on socks and shoes. Never use any corn, callous or ingrown toenail removing preparations that you can buy in pharmacies. Instead contact your Podiatrist for advice.

If the skin between your toes or around the toe nails becomes moist make sure you are drying them well after each wash. Applying surgical spirit (available from Pharmacies) to the affected areas once a day will help to dry and tone-up the area.

Selecting footwear

Often the feet can be swollen. Wearing a shoe one size bigger than usual will help to accommodate the swelling.

Ideal shoes have:

- a good shock absorbing outsole
- a broad based, low heel
- a square shaped deep toe area to accommodate your toes.

A plain fronted shoe with no seams particularly around the toes is best. Adjustable straps instead of laces are good as they hold the foot well at the back of the shoe and can prevent it from slipping forward.