

footprints

An informational newsletter for patients of APMA member podiatrists

Winter 2006

Holiday Tips for Happy Feet

After scouring the malls and running a multitude of errands, holiday shoppers are bound to have sore and tired feet. The American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) estimates that the average person takes about 8,000 to 10,000 steps on a normal day, and holiday shopping only adds steps to that total. However, there are a number of ways to give your feet a break and get them ready for even more “happy hunting.”

Begin your holiday shopping by wearing comfortable shoes with good support. If you know that you’ll be out for many hours, changing your shoes can also give you some quick relief. While you may not be the most fashionable shopper at the mall that day, you will be one of the most comfortable and won’t have to cut your trip short due to blisters or “barking dogs.”

While still out on the hunt for the perfect gift, you can employ a number of “quick fixes” that will keep you comfortably on your feet. First, while standing in line, you can do toe raises, toe points, and toe curls for five seconds each and repeat up to 10 times while you wait your turn. This helps to alleviate toe cramps

and strengthens the calf muscles. You can also rotate your ankles by cupping your foot under the back portion of the heel to brace your foot and leg and turning slowly at the ankle five times. This helps to loosen the ankle joint and relaxes your feet.

This second exercise is better done while seated, but with a partner lending a hand, you can even get this one accomplished while standing.

If you’re out during lunch or dinner, try to spend a few minutes with your feet elevated. While it may be difficult to get your feet above your heart during a restaurant or food court meal, raising them up off the floor is a good step on the road to relief. Later, when you get home, it’s a good idea to lie on the floor and get your toes up above your heart for real relief.

Once the car is full and you’ve exhausted your resources—both physical and financial—there are a few more options that can get you back on the road to recovery. Take a few minutes after unpacking to soothe your soles by soaking your feet for at least five minutes in a container filled with warm water. Pat them dry and apply lotion to hydrate and soothe those overworked feet. You can also use this time to massage your feet, which releases tension, increases circulation, and can even rejuvenate the skin. •



Facts and Myths About Arthritis



Arthritis in one form or another afflicts 66 million Americans—that’s nearly one in three. Since doctors of podiatric medicine are often the first to diagnose arthritis, having your podiatrist check your feet and ankles when you have some common arthritis symptoms can be a first step in alleviating or treating the pain.

By definition, arthritis is inflammation and swelling of the cartilage and lining of the joints, generally accompanied by an increase of fluid in the joints. Since your feet have 33 joints, and there is often pain associ-

ated with walking and weight-bearing, podiatrists often hear patients complaining of arthritis symptoms. Baby boomers may just now be feeling the pain of arthritis; the disease targets those over 50. Hereditary tendencies and trauma or injury to a joint can also be causes.

Treatment of arthritis varies from patient to patient, but your podiatrist can help manage pain through physical therapy and exercise, medication, and control of foot function. For those with severe arthritis, prescription shoes or even surgical intervention can be options. •

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Boot Camp — How to Pick the Right Boots for Your Feet

A quick scan of the shoe departments in any local mall will show that boots may be this season's hottest accessory. They're everywhere, not to mention in every size, shape, color and style imaginable. While fashion is a top priority when choosing the latest trends in boots, comfort and proper fit should also be important. The American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) recommends heeding the following suggestions before bolting out to buy a new pair based solely on fashion:

- * Look for a boot that provides stability. A wider heel less than two inches in height is best. Also, pick a boot with a firm heel counter. Just because the boot fabric covers your ankle doesn't mean it provides adequate support.
- * Make sure that the shape of the boot is wide enough for a comfortable fit on your feet. Some boot designs can be too narrow (especially in the toes) and can cause blisters and bunions. Try to select a boot made of leather or natural fibers, which will absorb moisture and reduce sweating.

Suggestions for Holiday Gifts

Often abused and usually overlooked, feet and ankles may not be the focus of your gift buying this year; however, thinking about them can give you a unique opportunity to provide your friends and family with gifts that are much appreciated and unique as well. All of the recommendations here were suggested by podiatric physicians and cover a wide range of options for any gift-giver.

* **Padded or athletic socks, The World's Softest Sock*** – We rarely buy new socks until it's too late and the holes are showing. These socks are especially great for those with sensitive feet.

* **Shoe inserts such as Spenco* products** – These make great stocking stuffers.

* **Crocs*** – The hottest thing in footwear these days. The Relief, by CrocsRx, is specifically designed to provide relief for a number of foot conditions.

* **Basket with foot care products** including gels, creams, lotions and soaks – Companies like Bath & Body Works can arrange baskets like this to your specifications.

* **Shoe trees** (cedar or treated) – These can be a great gift to keep shoes sweet smelling and in great shape.

* **Foot Petals products for women including Heavenly Heelz* and Tip Toes*** – For those women who just can't give up their high heels, these products help ease the discomfort temporarily and prevent blisters and red marks.

*Product has the Seal of Acceptance of the APMA •

* Try on the boots with hosiery or socks based on how you'll wear them. For example, dress boots should be tried with dress socks or hose, and outdoor boots with heavy, warm socks. Select a boot with a rubber sole and traction on the bottom to curtail slipping. Remember, most fashion boots are not made for the snow. •

Help Your Feet Beat the Wintertime Blues

Now that you've bid farewell to your colorful sandals and comfortable flip-flops, it's time to focus on keeping your feet healthy through the winter months. Winter can be hard on the feet. Not only are your feet confined to woolly socks and heavy boots, but they are also more prone to infection.

Two of the most common ailments during winter are fungal nails and ingrown toenails. A fungal infection takes hold underneath the surface of the nail and is more prevalent during colder weather because heavy socks promote moisture. If moisture gets trapped under the nail, it can become stagnant and unhealthy—an ideal place for fungi to thrive. The first sign of infection is a change in the nail's color; it may have white markings or become a darker hue. Your podiatrist can provide you with the best treatment and can monitor your overall foot and ankle care throughout the winter.

Another common winter ailment is ingrown toenails. Ingrown nails have typically been trimmed improperly, and the corners or sides dig into the soft tissue of nail grooves, often leading to soreness, redness, and swelling.

Podiatrists recommend cutting all toenails straight across when trimming so that they grow straight and not into the skin around the toes. To treat an ingrown nail at home, podiatrists suggest immersing the foot in warm salt water, then applying an antiseptic and a bandage to the area. However, once the problem becomes chronic, a visit to the podiatrist becomes a necessity.

To avoid foot problems this winter, podiatrists recommend changing shoes and socks daily and washing your feet with soap and water and drying them thoroughly at the end of each day. Also, try to wear socks made of synthetic fibers. They will tend to wick away moisture faster, which is especially important when playing sports. •

