

When your feet get beat !

Anyone who has ever suffered from foot ailments knows that the sufferers often cause or worsen the problems themselves. The wrong treatments can actually worsen foot ailments. To keep your feet healthy, try to avoid these common mistakes.

Athlete's Foot is a contagious fungus. If you've experienced athlete's foot you know that anti-fungal creams will clear up the condition in about two weeks. What most don't know is that the cream needs to be used for a full month to completely eliminate the fungus. Re-infection can occur when your feet aren't fully treated.

Bunions are bony protrusions that usually appear on the outside of the big toe. More than 3 percent of American adults undergo surgery each year to remove their bunions. However, many of these surgeries could be prevented with proper self care.

Bunions are irritated and worsened by inflammation and swelling. Wearing tight toed shoes, high heels or shoes that are actually a size too small (as many women do) will cause this.

If you already have bunions, you can reduce the pressure with over-the-counter orthotic inserts that support the arch. Wearing snug socks will also reduce the friction on bunions.

To relieve painful bunion attacks, mix one cup of vinegar in one gallon of warm water, then soak the foot for about 15 minutes daily. You can also wrap ice or a package of frozen peas in a thin towel and apply to the bunion twice a day for 15 minutes. This will help reduce the swelling and pain.

Calluses are thick layers of dead skin cells that accumulate in areas of the foot exposed to frequent pressure. High heels or flat shoes can make calluses worse by shifting body weight to the fore-foot. Shoes with one inch heels are preferable because they put less pressure on this part of the foot.

Using OTC callus-removal products usually don't work well and the active ingredient in them (salicylic acid) can actually damage healthy skin. The best time to remove calluses is after taking a warm bath or shower. Using a pumice stone, gently abrade the callus. Before going to bed, apply a moisturizer that contains copper (such as Copper Complex), a softening

agent that makes the calluses easier to remove. If this doesn't work, ask your doctor about microdermabrasion. This is a 15 to 30 minute, pain-free outpatient procedure that eliminates the need for surgery.

Corns are kernel-shaped area of thickened tissue which are similar to calluses but usually form at the tips of, or between the toes. People tend to roughly cut or abrade corns, causing more pain and often resulting in infection. It is more effective to soak the area of the corn in Epsom salt solution for 10 minutes. Then gently rub the corn with a pumice stone. Repeat the treatment daily until the corn is gone.

Ingrown Toenails are toenails that curve and push into the flesh instead of growing straight over the toe. This condition causes pain, redness and/or swelling at the ends or sides of the toes.

Trimming the nails on a curve increases the risk and causes most ingrown toenails. To reduce this risk, soak your feet in warm water, wash thoroughly with soap, and trim the nails straight across. If there is redness or other signs of infection, apply an OTC antibiotic (such as Neosporin). If the pain and redness do not go away after two days, your doctor may need to remove the portion of the nail beneath the skin. This can be done in the physician's office in approximately 15 minutes.

Taking these simple precautions will prevent foot discomfort that could last from days to weeks.