

Tips for keeping your feet healthy

Foot care is extremely important to your overall health and quality of life. Without comfortable feet, our ability to move, exercise and to enjoy life is greatly reduced.

Foot care should commence as a child and continue for life.

Prevention of foot, knee, hip and back pain is better than cure.

Tip 1:

- Get your foot and lower limb alignment checked to reduce risk of developing other problems such as:
 - Heel pain
 - Bunion pain
 - Knee pain

Tip 2:

- If you have flat feet, get them assessed to reduce risk of developing other problems.

Tip 3:

- If you have corns and callouses (hard dry skin) on your feet, get your feet treated because we can reduce your pain and help prevent it reoccurring.

Tip 4:

- Anyone with diabetes should get their feet checked every 6 months.

Tip 5:

- Get your child's feet checked - prevention is better than cure.

Tip 6:

- Travelling overseas – think about compression socks or stockings.

Tip 7:

- Having trouble cutting your toe nails – don't be embarrassed, that's what we are good at.

The Podiatrists at the Kew Foot Clinic are dedicated and highly trained and experienced to help you in all aspects of Podiatry treatment. Make an appointment today to get your feet checked. Ph: 98536877

Tip 1:

Get your foot and lower limb alignment checked:

To have a perfect functioning body, your body needs to work like a synchronized clock.

Every joint and muscle works as lever in perfect conjunction with one another. If there is just one imbalance in the system, it can set off a chain reaction resulting in loss of function and puts abnormal stresses on other joints.

If your feet and lower limbs are not aligned correctly there can be long term deformity developing over your lifetime causing degeneration of the major joints. You may not be experiencing any pain now but you might as you get older.

The most common problems that are caused by poor alignment of are:

- Bunions
- Heel pain
- Knee pain

Bunions:

The big toe plays an integral role in balance and propulsion. If your big toe joint has a bunion developing your body will become out of balance and lead to problems in other joints of your body.

- Bunions are a painful deformity, not just a cosmetic deformity of the foot.
 - Bunions cause severe distortion of your bones creating an abnormal cosmetic appearance and change how you walk (gait).
- Reduce your ability to pivot through the big toe, reducing the ability of the knee and hip to flex or bend correctly. This ultimately leads to lack of shock absorption, increased wear and tear on the joints leading to severe degeneration of these joints. This wear and tear can contribute to needing a knee or hip replacement at an earlier age.

Heel pain:

There are many causes of heel pain, the most common is Plantar fasciitis.

- The earlier you treat heel pain the easier it is to resolve your pain.
- Plantar fasciitis is a soft tissue strain where the muscle is over stretched when the foot flattens or pronates excessively.
- The plantar fascii loses its elasticity and flexibility as we get older.
- If symptoms are left untreated the soft tissue pain increases but also causes pain in the bone causing a heel spur to grow.
- Once a spur grows, treating the pain is much harder and takes a longer time to heal.

Knee pain:

- Knee pain is often related to the foot alignment.
- Abnormal alignment of the foot and lower leg is a common cause of knee pain.
- Orthotics can help relieve painful knee symptoms and help prevent injuries and degeneration of the knee joint by controlling the abnormal movements of the foot which in turn affects internal rotation of knee.

Orthotics or arch support help improve the alignment of the feet and put the lower limbs into a more natural anatomical position. This improves how the muscles, tendon and joints function and reduce the abnormal stresses on these joints.

Tip 2:

Flat feet can cause pain in your feet, knee, hips and lower back.

- Flat feet commonly cause stresses in many joints of the feet leading to arthritis and degeneration of the joints. This can cause the feet to lose their flexibility and lose the correct range of motion required to walk normally and pain free.
- Flat feet also contribute to severe knee pain and degeneration of this joint.
- Degeneration of the knee joints can contribute to requiring a knee replacement at an earlier age.

For feet with bunions, heel pain, flat feet and knee pain, we use orthotics to help improve the alignment of the feet and put the lower limbs into a more natural anatomical position. This improves how the muscles, tendon and joints function and reduce the abnormal stresses on these joints.

Tip 3:

Corns and Callouses are not normal. Hard skin grows in response to abnormal pressure areas of the feet.

This photo of the camels shows callouses on their legs. This is normal for a camel as they sit down on hot sand for extended periods of time and the calluses protect their skin and hair from burning.

But for a human hard dry skin is not normal and can cause severe discomfort. This skin grows to try to protect an area of our foot that has abnormal or increased pressure to protect it from being damaged.

- This hard dry skin can be debrided (cut off) without causing you any pain.
- We recommend you get your alignment of your feet checked so we can prevent this hard skin from growing.

We can realign your feet using arch supports or orthotics. Orthotics can provide cushioning and shock absorption. They can also help improve the alignment of the feet reducing the pressure areas and thus reducing the likelihood of your corns and callouses growing back.

Tip 4:

If you have diabetes you should get your feet checked every 6 months.

Why is the foot of great concern in people who have diabetes?

Diabetes damages the nerves:

- Diabetes damages the nerves, leading to peripheral neuropathy. This means that the nerve fibres and receptors are damaged leading to a loss of sensation.
- If you cut yourself you may not be able to feel any pain and not know you have an injured foot which can become infected easily. In some cases the foot can develop gangrene.

Diabetes affects vascular circulation:

- Diabetes affects your circulation from your heart through to all the blood vessels that lead to your feet. The feet are the furthest away from your heart and don't always get blood flow with sufficient oxygen and nutrients. Therefore healing of wounds can be slow or impaired.

Diabetes affects the joints:

- Diabetes affects the joints by rendering the collagen and other soft tissues stiff and rigid. This can cause pressure areas on the feet that can ultimately ulcerate because you can't feel the pressure and unable to heal the pressure sores.

If you have diabetes you can obtain an Enhanced Primary Care (EPC) plan from your local doctor. This is a Medicare funded programme where you can go to a Podiatrist and only pay a small fee out of pocket to have Podiatry treatment.

Tip 5:

Get your child's feet checked – Ideal time is age 5 to 6 but it's never too late:

- Commonly children don't complain of any pain or discomfort despite having flat feet or alignment problems. This is because their muscles and ligaments are generally very flexible so they can accommodate mal-alignment and tracking of the muscles and joint attachments without feeling any discomfort.
- Therefore it is very important that a Podiatrist checks a young foot for any problems. Many problems go undetected because the child does not complain of any pain and the issues are not noticed until later in life.

Common causes of foot pain in children:

- Flat Feet
- Pidgeon Toed (Intoed gait)
- Knock Knees – Knee pain (usually caused by poor foot alignment and fatigue of the muscles and tendons)
- Growing pains
- General overall ache in the feet
- Severs Disease (Heel and Achilles tendon pain)
- Childrens' sports injuries

Tip 6:

Travelling overseas – Avoid a DVT (Deep Vein Thrombosis / Blood clot)

- If you are travelling overseas it is recommended that you wear some form of compression socks or stockings.
- Wearing compression garments can significantly reduce your risk of developing a deep vein thrombosis.
- A blood clot generally causes severe pain in the back of the calf muscle of your leg. If the clot breaks away it can lodge in your lungs causing death.
- Prevention of this problem is easier than cure.

Tip 7:

Having trouble cutting your toe nails – Don't be embarrassed because that's what we are good at. We have the right equipment to make this job easy.

Read the article written by Geoffrey Wright, The Weekly Times 2003.

There is a number of common nail problems. Most common are nails that have fungus in them making them thickened and difficult to cut.

There are a multiple treatments to try and kill the fungus.

Make an appointment to come and see us and we will do our best to help you with your problem or give you the best advice.