

Aged care for feet????

Putting your best foot forward



We often take our feet for granted and it's not until they start giving us grief that we appreciate just how vital they are.

Foot pain is something we all experience from time to time. But it can affect many aspects of your life.

A shopping trip, playing with grandkids or a game of golf are times where you often take your feet for granted — until a problem strikes. Podiatry, also known as chiropody, is helpful in preventing problems, not just fixing them.

Problems common with age

There are more than 300 different foot conditions. Some are inherited, but for older people, most stem from the impact of years of use. However, even among older people, many foot problems can be treated successfully.

As we age, our feet tend to spread and lose the fatty pads that cushion the bottom of the feet. Having your feet measured for shoe sizes more frequently is a good idea, since the feet spread. Don't assume your shoe size will remain constant.

Dry skin and brittle nails are other conditions older people commonly face. Neglecting your feet can lead to infections and reduce mobility, making it important to focus on foot health.

When to seek help

As the feet grow older, they naturally develop more problems due to many years of use. But painful and uncomfortable feet are not a natural part of growing old, or something to 'put up with'. A lot can be done to improve comfort and relieve pain, which will keep you mobile. Early warning signs of problems include dry sensations, feelings of cold, numbness, and discoloration. Inspect your feet regularly, or have someone help you check them. If you notice any redness, cracks in the skin, or sores, consult your podiatrist.

It is recommended that you have your feet examined by a podiatrist at least once a year to pick up any issues early.

Foot health tips

- Properly fitted, supportive shoes are essential. Sloppy old favourites should be thrown out, as they will make you feel unstable.
- A shoe with a firm sole and soft upper is best for daily activities.
- Walking is the best exercise for your feet.
- Pantyhose or stockings should be of the correct size and preferably free of seams.
- Except at the beach, avoid going barefoot, even in your own home.
- Do not wear tight garters as these can affect your circulation.
- Never cut corns and callouses yourself and avoid using over-the-counter corn products. They may do more harm than good, unless they have been recommended to you by your podiatrist.
- Bathe your feet daily in lukewarm water, using a mild soap, preferably one containing moisturisers, or use a moisturiser separately.
- Trim or file your toenails straight across just below the end of the toe. File using downward strokes with an emery board to finish off.
- If you can't bend and do it yourself, have a podiatrist cut your toenails for you. They can even cut heavily overgrown or thick nails painlessly.

Cost and referrals

Some private health insurance provides cover for podiatry services.

Government-funded services are available through the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

A GP's referral is not required to visit a podiatrist.