

TAKING CARE OF YOUR FEET

By Dr. John A. Papa, DC, FCCP(OR)(C)

The feet are an individual's contact points with the ground, so how they support the rest of the body is critical. Our feet have nearly 100 individual working parts, which all have to function together when we stand, walk, run and jump to provide proper stability and balance.

When a small problem develops in our feet, the subtle changes in the way we move can cause a chain reaction of adjustments in our posture and walking mechanics. This can lead to symptoms such as: **localized foot pain, arch** and **heel pain, along with ankle, knee, hip, and back pain.**



Protecting your feet and choosing proper footwear can go a long way in preventing injury and pain. Below are some helpful tips that can ensure your feet are protected and functioning to the best of their ability.

- Choose footwear that is appropriate for your foot type. For example, people with low arches, called pronators, will need a shoe that provides some degree of stability. A shoe with good cushioning is important for people with high arches, called supinators.
- Select a footwear store with knowledgeable staff who can provide advice on the shoe that best suits your activity, body structure and type of foot.
- Remember that not all shoes are created equally. The same shoe sizes can have different fits depending on the manufacturer. Be sure to try several sizes to find the most comfortable shoe.
- Shop for footwear in the afternoon or evening, as your feet tend to accumulate fluid and swell throughout the day. What may have been comfortable earlier in the day could now feel tight later in the day.
- Avoid buying shoes that you feel need a break-in period. Shoes should be comfortable from the first time you put them on.
- Don't cheap out on your shoes! Better quality shoes may cost more but will pay off in terms of support and sturdiness. A mid-priced shoe may offer the best value.
- Do not hesitate to replace footwear after excessive wear as it may not be providing you with proper support and stability.
- Consider custom orthotics to help support your feet. Orthotics are mechanical aids that fit into your shoes as comfortably as an insole and work on your feet much like glasses work on your eyes – they decrease stress and strain on your body by bringing your feet into proper alignment. This helps rebalance your feet and reduces pain and discomfort by enhancing your body's natural movements.
- Remember to exercise regularly and try to maintain a healthy weight. Extra weight adds mechanical stress on your feet, knees, hips, and back.



If you have foot pain that limits your daily functioning, you should contact a licensed health professional who deals in the diagnosis and treatment of foot problems. For additional information on foot pain and treatment of muscle and joint injuries, visit www.nhwc.ca.

This article is a basic summary for educational purposes only. It is not intended, and should not be considered, as a replacement for consultation, diagnosis or treatment by a duly licensed health practitioner.