

# The Sole Scoop

## Top Foot Docs Reveal Answers to Common Questions

According to a recent survey conducted by the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA), 69% of Americans have never visited the podiatrist, however about 1 in 4 say they have suffered from some type of foot distress in the last twelve months. So, what's stopping Americans from seeking the proper treatment? APMA member Dr. Leslie Campbell has found that "the reason more people don't visit the podiatrist is because most don't realize how easy it is to perform or prescribe treatments that will alleviate their pain and cure their problems."

Thirty-one percent of the Americans surveyed do go to the podiatrist and of those, nearly 90% said they were very satisfied with the treatment they received to improve their condition. To find out the scoop on what's ailing the feet of most Americans, we went behind the scenes to ask top podiatrists from the APMA to identify the ten questions most frequently asked by their patients.

1. Question: Often when I buy a new pair of shoes they feel comfortable in the store, but after wearing them only a few hours, they feel unbearably tight. Why does this happen?

Answer: Always shop for shoes in the afternoon or evening because feet tend to swell throughout the day. "If shopping in the beginning of the day, prior to being on your feet for an extended period of time, your feet may actually be smaller and you may be purchasing a shoe that will ultimately be too tight," explains APMA member Dr. Jane Andersen.

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2. Question: My toenails are thick and discolored, what can I do to make them look better before going barefoot at the beach this summer?

Answer: A fungus invading and inhabiting the nailplate and underlying nailbed often causes thickened and discolored nails. Current trends in therapy can be directed to eliminating the fungus with prescribed oral and/or topical medications. APMA member Dr. Helena Reid says, "consider visiting a podiatrist to ensure that the proper treatment can be started immediately to get your feet in shape for summer." Consider purchasing Pedinol's Nail Scrub over-the-counter, which holds the APMA Seal of Approval, and cleanses, bleaches and smoothes out rough, thickened nails that usually result from a fungus infection.

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3. Question: I absolutely hate my feet because I can never get them to fit into stylish high heels. I have at least three friends getting married this year and want to be able to wear sexy high heels to all of their weddings. I am contemplating getting that new cosmetic foot surgery that everyone is talking about so that I can slip my feet into some fabulous new shoes. This surgery is easy, right?

Answer: APMA member Dr. Joseph Caporusso says, "Any type of surgery has its risks and potential complications." It is unwise to have surgery if your feet don't hurt to begin with and you have no problems walking. Surgical procedures of the foot and ankle are generally performed for relief of pain, restoration of function, and reconstruction of deformities, which may also have the additional benefit of improved appearance. Patients considering surgery of the foot or ankle, whether for medical or aesthetic reasons, are advised to consult a member of the American Podiatric Medical Association. Those podiatrists should have the appropriate training, experience, and credentials to properly perform the surgery, manage the post-operative care, and treat the

possible complications. Bottom line: Find shoes that fit your foot, don't alter your foot to fit your shoe.

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4. Question: I am embarrassed by the warts I have on my feet. None of my friends experience this problem. I have tried tons of over-the-counter medications, but they have all failed. Can anything be done to help me get rid of my warts for good?

Answer: Approximately 4,500,000 Americans over the age of 18 suffer from warts, so you're not alone. "Warts are growths on the skin caused by a viral infection and can spread if untreated," informs APMA member Dr. Leslie Campbell. There are many effective treatments for permanently removing warts, and by visiting a podiatrist you can discuss options including obtaining prescriptions for topical and oral medication. If these therapies are unsuccessful, office procedures including freezing (cryotherapy) and surgical removal are available. State of the art laser therapy (pulse dye) is often successful as well. Dr. Campbell says, "Treatment can be very effective in several sessions and is performed with minimal discomfort."

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5. Question: I am scared to take off my shoes when I am at my boyfriend's house because my feet often smell badly after they have been in my shoes for an extended period of time. I don't want him to think I smell, so is there anything I can do to eliminate this odor?

Answer: Bromhidrosis is the term used to describe smelly feet, which is excessive sweating of the more than 250,000 sweat glands in the foot. Closed shoes aggravate sweaty feet and set up the perfect environment for bacteria to grow, leading to more odor and more sweat. "Before slipping on your shoes, try rubbing cornstarch or spraying antiperspirant directly on the soles of your feet to stop the sweating," advises APMA member Dr. Ronald Jensen. In addition, spray Lysol directly into shoes to eliminate existing odors. However, to resolve a foot-odor problem, a podiatrist is capable of prescribing topical medications.

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6. Question: A few days after I get a pedicure at the nail salon, the area around my big toenail becomes inflamed and really hurts. Why does this happen and is there anything I can do to stop the pain?

Answer: Pedicurists often improperly trim nails by drastically rounding the corners of each nail. This leads to the development of an ingrown toenail, which is one of the most common foot problems affecting both men and women. If the condition of the ingrown toenail is exacerbated, it may need to be surgically removed by a podiatrist. "It is important to remember to cut all toenails straight across when trimming so that they grow straight and not into the skin around the toes," informs APMA member Dr. Terri Walton. To relieve the pain these ingrowns cause and to lessen the likelihood of further infection, soak the infected foot in warm water with salt and then visit a podiatrist.

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7. Question: I just bought a new pair of sneakers and I have noticed that after I workout my toes hurt and both of my big toenails are starting to look a little discolored. Why is this happening and how can I fix it?

Answer: This is a very common situation because many people forget to have their feet measured while standing in the shoe store. You shouldn't rely on the size of your last pair because shoe models can vary and feet can get larger and wider over time (especially during pregnancy). The reason your toes hurt after your workout is most likely because your shoes are too small and your toes are jamming into the front of the shoe with every step. APMA member Dr. Jane Andersen says, "when buying running shoes you should have a thumb's width of room at the end of the toe when standing to provide ample room for your feet." Your nails are becoming discolored because this jamming has caused the nails significant trauma. If you continue to workout in

these sneakers, your nail could become so damaged that it may fall off or need to be surgically removed.

Another important point about which Dr. Andersen reminds us is that “runners should replace sneakers every 300-500 miles.” Even if they look brand new, the soles and insoles are most likely worn from hours of pounding the treadmill. Exercise walkers should replace sneakers every six months, and the general non-exercising public should trade their sneaks in at least once a year.

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8. Question: My favorite pair of sandals cause the most horrible blisters all over my feet. I refuse to stop wearing them, so is there any way to make my blisters go away faster?

Answer: Our advice would be to discard all shoes that cause any type of discomfort – no matter how cute they may be. Because the average person takes between 8,000 – 10,000 steps a day and our feet must carry us for a lifetime, it’s important to maintain optimal foot health by wearing shoes that are supportive and comfortable. However, if you insist on continuing to wear your favorite sandals, beware of the blisters getting infected. To treat blisters, remember that as tempting as it may be, do not pop it. If, however, the blister becomes very painful, APMA member Dr. Glenn Gastwirth says, “carefully open a corner of the blister with a sterilized utensil, like a sewing needle. Hold the needle parallel to the skin and poke 2-3 holes at the edge of the blister. Gently apply pressure to drain fluid. Apply antibiotic cream and cover with a bandage immediately.” The APMA also recommends purchasing an over-the-counter product like Dr. Scholl’s Cushlin Blister Treatment Pads, which will help blisters heal faster and provide your foot with extra cushioning so you can continue to wear shoes.

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9. Question: When buying a new pair of cute sandals this season, what should I look for in a shoe to make sure that they will also be comfortable?

Answer: According to APMA member Dr. Jane Andersen, “Materials like terry cloth, soft leather and mesh fabrics are great for letting your feet breathe during the hot days and nights of summer.” And, she adds, “Because they move with you and cause minimal pressure, the likelihood of those dreaded blisters developing is lessened.” Ensure the shoe fits properly by not allowing it to hang off the edge. Also, look for ultra-cushioned soles with low, sturdy heels for optimal shock absorption and support.

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10. Question: Throughout the workday my feet fall asleep while I am at my desk. Is there anything I can do while I am in the office to keep my feet from getting that uncomfortable tingly feeling?

Answer: The reason your feet are falling asleep at your desk is most likely because they are being deprived of circulation. To keep the blood flowing all the way to your toes while you are sitting at your desk, sit with your legs uncrossed. Dr. Helena Reid also recommends the following other techniques for improving circulation throughout the day:

1. Wiggle your toes and roll your ankles a few times;
2. Unlace, unzip or loosen the straps on your shoes;
3. Get up from your desk and take frequent walks, even if it’s just to the copier and back; and
4. Stretch your calves. Find a wall and place one foot firmly on the ground and the other angled against the wall so that your toes are pointed up, touching the wall, and your heel is on the floor. Then lean into the wall for about 5-10 seconds. Repeat 2-3 times on each leg.

For more information and to find a list of podiatric physicians in your area, log on to [www.APMA.org](http://www.APMA.org) or call 1-800-FOOTCARE.