

# The American Podiatric Medical Association Self-Evaluation Tool

Since each foot contains 28 bones, 33 joints, 107 ligaments, 19 muscles and 5 toenails, and bears a tremendous amount of daily pressure from the entire body, the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) is encouraging people to pay closer attention to their feet. Visiting a podiatrist for an annual exam is recommended by the APMA to ensure optimal foot health, but the first step is for people to understand their own feet. To empower Americans to take charge of their foot care, the APMA has created the following self-evaluation tool for people to try and identify the common, treatable foot ailments that may be affecting them.

What To Look For	What It Could Be	Possible Causes	What You Can Do	What A Podiatrist Will Do
Redness, Pain, Swelling around the nail	Ingrown toenails Infected toenails Injury to the toenails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shoe Pressure</li> <li>- Poor foot structure</li> <li>- Heredity</li> <li>- Improper Nail Trimming</li> <li>- Trauma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inspect nails daily and trim toenails straight across as a preventative measure on a regular basis</li> <li>- Do not trim nail corners too short</li> <li>- Keep nails clean and dry and remove nail polish once a week</li> <li>- Try not to wear tight-fitting socks or shoes</li> <li>- See a podiatrist at the first sign of a problem</li> <li>- If you have diabetes or circulation problems, do not cut your own nails</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perform a physical examination and an x-ray evaluation when necessary</li> <li>- Remove the ingrown portion of the nail</li> <li>- Culture the nail</li> <li>- Prescribe appropriate medications, such as antibiotics</li> <li>- Perform surgical correction of the nail when needed</li> </ul>
Thickened, Discolored, Loose, or Deformed Toenail	Fungal Nail Indication of other medical conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Result of trauma to toenail</li> <li>- Could be an indication of other medical conditions such as: diabetes, arthritis, cancer, and psoriasis</li> <li>- Often, the infection starts in the skin as athlete's foot, which may spread to the nails</li> <li>- Shoes and socks create a warm, dark, and humid environment which encourages fungal growth</li> <li>- Heredity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Keep shoes and socks dry as a preventative measure</li> <li>- Practice good foot hygiene, including daily washing of the feet with soap and water; drying feet carefully, especially between the toes</li> <li>- Change shoes regularly</li> <li>- Wear wicking acrylic or cotton socks</li> <li>- Inspect toenails and trim them straight across on a regular basis</li> <li>- Do not use nail polish</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perform a physical examination Culture the infected nail</li> <li>- Prescribe appropriate medications, such as an oral anti-fungal medicine</li> <li>- Perform debridement or removal of the nail as indicated</li> </ul>

FOR PEOPLE WHO MAY HAVE OTHER

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Red, flaky, dry, cracked, itchy skin, smelly feet	Athlete's Foot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The feet are vulnerable because shoes commonly create a warm, dark and humid environment that encourages fungal growth</li> <li>- Athlete's foot can be contracted in dressing rooms, locker room showers and swimming pool locker rooms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inspect the skin on feet everyday and be aware of changes or unusual growths</li> <li>- Keep shoes and socks dry as a preventative measure</li> <li>- Practice good foot hygiene, including daily washing of the feet with soap and water; drying feet carefully, especially between the toes</li> <li>- Change shoes regularly</li> <li>- Wear wicking acrylic or cotton socks</li> <li>- Moisturize skin, but avoid between the toes</li> <li>- Wear flip-flops in public showers</li> <li>- Read the label on over-the-counter products carefully to avoid serious complications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prescribe topical medications</li> <li>- Prescribe oral anti-fungal medications</li> </ul>
Painful thickening of the skin The development of a hard and flat, elevated surface most often on the sole of the foot	Warts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A virus causes warts, which typically invades the skin through small cuts and abrasions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Avoid walking barefoot</li> <li>- Change shoes daily</li> <li>- Keep feet clean and dry</li> <li>- Avoid home treatments</li> <li>- Do not dig out warts - see a podiatrist for treatment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perform a physical examination and evaluation</li> <li>- Initiate treatment, including possible surgical removal</li> <li>- Prescribe medication</li> <li>- If left untreated, warts can grow to an inch or more in circumference and can spread into clusters of several warts; these are often called mosaic warts</li> </ul>
A painful, fluid-filled lesion	Blisters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ill fitting shoes</li> <li>- Stiff shoes</li> <li>- Wrinkled socks against the skin</li> <li>- Excessive moisture</li> <li>- Foot deformities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Keep feet dry</li> <li>- Always wear socks as a cushion between your feet and shoes</li> <li>- Wear properly fitting shoes</li> <li>- Do not open or pop a blister, carefully open a corner of the blister with a sterilized utensil like a sewing needle, drain, apply antibiotic cream and cover with a bandage immediately</li> <li>- Treat a mild blister with mild soap and water; cover it with an antiseptic ointment and protective soft gel dressing</li> <li>- Check blister regularly to ensure it doesn't get infected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove the blister surface if needed</li> <li>- Prescribe appropriate medications, topical or oral</li> <li>- Recommend padding, dressings and friction reducing measures</li> </ul>

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Painful thickening and build up of skin that forms at points of pressure or over bony prominence or on the bottom side of foot	Calluses/Corns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Repeated friction and pressure from skin rubbing against bony areas or against an irregularity in a shoe</li> <li>- Heredity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wear supportive shoes with a wide toe box and a low heel</li> <li>- Use over-the-counter creams, avoiding medicated callus/corn remover pads</li> <li>- Read the label on any over-the-counter products thoroughly to avoid serious complications</li> <li>- After soaking feet in warm water, use a pumice stone or file to treat - only if you're not a diabetic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perform a foot examination</li> <li>- Conduct an x-ray evaluation, if needed</li> <li>- Perform trimming or padding of the lesions</li> <li>- Perform surgery as indicated</li> </ul>
Enlargement (bump) or deformity at the base of the big toe It may be swollen, tender and painful with the wearing of footgear	Bunions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Misalignment of the joint</li> <li>- Heredity</li> <li>- Trauma</li> <li>- Biomedical abnormalities</li> <li>- Neuromedical disorders</li> <li>- Inflammatory joint disease</li> <li>- Congenital deformities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have feet measure every time shoes are purchased</li> <li>- Avoid shoes with stitching or seams that rub over bony areas</li> <li>- Do not wear pointy shoes - wear supportive shoes with a wide toe box and good support</li> <li>- Apply cold compresses</li> <li>- Soak the foot in lukewarm water to relieve pain</li> <li>- Use over-the-counter footpads</li> <li>- Use over-the-counter anti-inflammatory</li> <li>- If unsure if shoes are proper fitting, see a podiatrist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perform a physical examination</li> <li>- Perform x-ray evaluation</li> <li>- Recommended padding or taping</li> <li>- Prescribe orthotics as needed</li> <li>- Perform surgery as indicated</li> </ul>
Ankle, knee or low back pain; difficulty walking	Flat foot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A structural deformity resulting in the lowering of the arch of the foot that is sometimes referred to as "fallen arches"</li> <li>- Heredity</li> <li>- Arthritis</li> <li>- Trauma</li> <li>- Musculoskeletal disorders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wear supportive shoes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perform a physical examination and gait analysis, x-rays and surgery as needed</li> <li>- Prescribe custom orthotics</li> </ul>

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Sweaty, smelly feet that do not itch or appear to have a rash	Bromhidrosis (a.k.a. Foot Odor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase of perspiration from the more than 250,000 sweat glands in the foot as a result of increased body temperature</li> <li>- Closed shoes aggravate sweaty feet and set up the perfect environment for bacteria to grow, leading to more odor and more sweat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rub cornstarch or spray antiperspirant directly on the soles of the feet and spray Lysol into shoes.</li> <li>- Keep shoes and socks dry as a preventative measure</li> <li>- Practice good foot hygiene, including daily washing of the feet with soap and water; drying feet carefully, especially between the toes</li> <li>- Change shoes regularly</li> <li>- Wear wicking acrylic or cotton socks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perform a physical examination</li> <li>- Recommend medicated powders</li> </ul>
Bony prominence on the toes	Hammertoes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Heredity</li> <li>- Ill-fitting shoes</li> <li>- Muscle imbalance</li> <li>- Arthritis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wear a supportive shoe with a deep toe box</li> <li>- Apply cold compresses</li> <li>- Soak the foot in lukewarm water to relieve pain</li> <li>- Massage and stretch toes to help maintain flexibility</li> <li>- Always wear work and activity appropriate shoes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perform a physical examination, x-ray evaluation</li> <li>- Perform trimming and padding, and potentially surgery, if needed</li> </ul>
Pain, burning, tingling numbness between the toes or in the ball of the foot	Neuroma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Benign growth of nerve tissue frequently found between the third and fourth toes</li> <li>- Improper or ill-fitting shoes</li> <li>- High heeled shoes</li> <li>- Smoking impairs circulation and excessive alcohol consumption may lead to nerve damage</li> <li>- Trauma</li> <li>- Heredity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Change to shoes with lower heels</li> <li>- Avoid tight-fitting shoes, socks and hosiery</li> <li>- Wear supportive shoes with a roomy toe box</li> <li>- Do not use heating devices on feet; instead soak in cool water and ice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perform a physical evaluation, x-ray, and surgery if needed</li> <li>- Recommend padding and taping</li> <li>- Prescribe custom orthotics and anti-inflammatory medication</li> <li>- Administer cortisone injections</li> </ul>

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Bottom of the heel and arch are painful	Plantar Fasciitis/Heel Spur Syndrome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stretching and inflammation of the long band of connective tissue that running from the heel to the ball of the foot</li> <li>- Bony overgrowth of the heel bone</li> <li>- Muscle imbalance</li> <li>- Bone deformity</li> <li>- Obesity</li> <li>- Trauma</li> <li>- Tightness of the muscles on the back of the leg</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Warm up and stretch properly before exercise</li> <li>- Exercise and stretch daily, however reduce activity and see a podiatrist for treatment options</li> <li>- Do not go barefoot</li> <li>- Wear shoes that have a strong, supportive arch and heel</li> <li>- Wear lower heels, or at the very least vary heel heights to maintain flexibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perform a physical evaluation, x-ray, and surgery, if needed</li> <li>- Recommend padding and taping</li> <li>- Prescribe orthotic devices and appropriate medications</li> <li>- Administer injections</li> </ul>
Pain, redness and swelling	Stress Fracture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overuse or strain of foot can create an incomplete crack in the bone</li> <li>- Medical conditions such as osteoporosis</li> <li>- Medications such as steroids</li> <li>- Sudden increased activity level</li> <li>- Feet that are not structurally sound, however even a normal foot can develop a stress fracture from repetitive use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use cold compresses or ice</li> <li>- Get complete rest</li> <li>- Elevate the feet</li> <li>- Stay off the feet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perform a physical evaluation and x-ray</li> <li>- Immobilize or cast the foot/leg</li> <li>- Prescribe custom medications or orthotics</li> </ul>
Swelling or recurring pain and tenderness in any joint, redness or heat in a joint, limitation in motion of a joint, early morning stiffness and skin changes including rashes and growths	Arthritis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Since the foot contains 33 joints and bears a tremendous amount of weight and pressure, feet may be more susceptible to arthritis than other parts of the body</li> <li>- Heredity</li> <li>- Age</li> <li>- Viral and bacterial infections</li> <li>- Excessive weight</li> <li>- Prescription and illegal drug</li> <li>- Ill-fitting shoes</li> <li>- Trauma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wear supportive shoes on a daily basis</li> <li>- Begin a program of physical therapy, exercise or massage</li> <li>- Use ice packs or hot packs</li> <li>- Soak feet in lukewarm water</li> <li>- Wear shock-retarding insoles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prescribe appropriate anti-inflammatory medications</li> <li>- Perform appropriate x-rays and joint evaluation</li> <li>- Recommend custom orthotics</li> <li>- If the problem persists, surgery may be necessary</li> </ul>

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A breakdown of the skin on an area of the foot that may be difficult to heal	Diabetic Ulcers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uncontrolled diabetes mellitus</li> <li>- Vascular insufficiency</li> <li>- Lack of sensation</li> <li>- Ill-fitting shoes</li> <li>- Trauma</li> <li>- Heredity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consult a podiatric physician immediately</li> <li>- Alert the doctor's office that you are a diabetic with a foot sore</li> <li>- Self-treatment is not recommended for this serious condition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perform a physical examination</li> <li>- Perform x-ray evaluation</li> <li>- Perform debridement and wound care</li> <li>- Conduct laboratory tests</li> <li>- Initiate total medical team approach, which may include a family practice doctor, endocrinologist, internist, vascular surgeon and an infectious disease specialist</li> </ul>

While daily foot maintenance is an important, it is critical to visit a podiatrist annually for a check-up. For more foot health information and a list of podiatric physicians in your area, visit the APMA Web site at [www.apma.org](http://www.apma.org) or call 1-800-FOOTCARE.