Foot Care: Good Health Tips

If you have ever had a corn or a callus on your feet, then you can easily understand the need for foot care. But more importantly, if you take care of your feet—they'll take care of you. Here's how.

By Ada Dennis

Imagine, if you will, a ten year old child carrying a bag weighing 80 pounds or so, and attempting to walk, run, play without ever putting the bag down. Sound impossible?

Then imagine a man of six feet or a woman of five feet carrying a bag of 180 pounds or 120 pounds while walking, running, dancing, skating.

If any of those feats sound like an attraction at a carnival, consider that the feet, only slightly larger than the hands, with fewer muscles than the arms, *do* carry bodies of those and greater weights through miles of motor activities.

Is it any wonder that they sometimes ache for a little tender loving care?

For most minor discomforts and to make the feet more attractive in the latest sandals, a little personal attention is all that is necessary.

However, some apparently minor problems may actually require medical attention. To find out more about those, *DAWN* - talked to Dr. Marc Lenet, Chief of Podiatry at Baltimore's Lutheran Hospital.

Corns & Calluses

The local hardening and thickening of the skin on the toes is commonly called "corns." Anywhere else, such as the bottom or sides of the feet, those sometimes painful little lumps are called "calluses."

According to Dr. Lenet, they are essentially the same protective device employed by nature in response to localized pressure. They occur most commonly, he said, on any of two joints on the second, third, fourth or fifth toes, but are not generally a malfunction of the bone as are bunions.

Dr. Lenet cautions strongly against "bathroom surgery" or the use of over the counter drugs in the treatment of corns.

"It's important to identify the cause of a corn or callus," he said. "Many times a prominent bone is the source of irritation, in which case the corn will grow back.

"Persons with unidentified circulatory problems could develop infections or other complications as a result of bathroom surgery or the use of over the counter drugs. You know the type that you drop on the area and remove the corn a few days later? No good.

"Seek a doctor if corns or calluses are uncomfortable enough to need cutting or drugs."

The best prevention for common corns are properly fitted shoes, according to Dr. Lenet. They should be long enough and wide enough to "to give a little" with the movement of the foot.

Bunions

The sometimes painful enlargement around the joint of the big toe, called a bunion, is hereditary about 90% of the time, Dr. Lenet told us.

It shows up at all ages, not just middle age as we thought, and sometimes requires corrective surgery.

Bunions are not caused by improperly fitted shoes, but can be irritated by pressure on the area. They do not always require surgery, but in severe cases, can be treated by complete replacement of the toe joint.

This operation is fairly common in cases of severe deformity or discomfort, according to Dr. Lenet, and there have been very few cases of a toe rejecting a replacement.

"The toe joint has a high rate of acceptance," he said. "The procedure is generally successful with little to no discomfort."

Most bunions, however, do not require surgery, and they are less likely to cause discomfort if pressure on them is avoided.

"Minor pain and swelling of bunions can be treated with warm soaks to the area," Dr. Lenet said. "Inflammation responds better to wet heat."

Swelling, Sprains

Swelling and sprains are by no means the same thing, although one may be caused by the other.

Swelling of the feet can be caused by standing for long periods of time, riding on airplanes, or even heavy consumption of alcoholic or carbonated beverages.

In those instances, Dr. Lenet recommends elevation of the feet and hot or cold soaks.

In more serious instances, swelling may be caused by systemic diseases such as diabetes or circulatory problems. If you have or suspect you have such a problem, there are likely to be other symptoms, and obviously, medical attention is in order.

Swelling caused by a sprain or fracture is likely to be accompanied by pain, which is not to be ignored, cautions Dr. Lenet.

"Always pay attention to pain

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Things To Do

— Lie down and elevate your hot, tired feet. While resting, meditate, think a pleasant thought.

— Try a warm soak (if you do not have an injury) in enough water to submerge the feet up to the ankles. Add a little epsom salt to the water to help relieve tenderness caused by walking or standing.

— After drying the feet thoroughly, Dr. Lenet recommends powdering with a little talc or antibacterial foot powder.

— Ask someone to give you a foot massage, using thumb pressure on balls of the feet, the instep, and the achilles tendon.

— Try using a pumice stone about once a week to remove dead skin and soften callused areas.

— Give yourself a pedicure or treat yourself to a professional one.

— Slather on a rich lotion or petroleum jelly *after* nail polish is dry. Wear socks to protect the carpet or sheets.

— Try these dance exercises to slim the ankles and increase circulation.

— Lie or sit on the floor with legs extended; alternately point the feet, toes curled under and then flex until heels are off the floor. Do 8 to 10 repetitions each foot.

Rotate the foot from the ankle. Make wide circles pointing first left, then straight, then left, and flex up and around. Do about 8 rotations each foot. Feel the tension ease.

— Wear the most comfortable shoes you can. Remember, high heels are for sitting down and crossing your legs.

How To Plan The Perfect Party

By J.B. Miller

Everyone loves a good party, especially now when the holidays are here and there is so much to celebrate. The real test, of course, is to be able to enjoy a party when you're the one throwing it—not always an easy task.

Step one is planning. Select a date, define your budget (*before*, not after, you start buying), and decide what kind of a party you want: size, theme, etc., and the friends that will help make it all happen.

Imagination and the Invitation

When you send out invitations, try to make them attractive—be creative with the card. This doesn't mean you have to hire an artist to design the cover, but think about the image you are trying to get across, perhaps a simple collage of winter scenes or a picture of your house.

If half your guests usually wander in mid-way through the party, you probably didn't give good enough directions. A simple map of your neighborhood, showing how to get to your house, will help people reach you more easily.

Remember that invitations should really be sent about a month in advance of the party. While you're eating your Thanksgiving turkey is probably a good time to plan things out. Phone calls following the mailing of the invitations is a good way to find out exactly who's coming to dinner.

If you've got to go disco, remember that you can also dance to rock and roll; you'll be better off if you can give your guests some variety. To create your dance floor, clear furniture away to the side of the room. It's much better to dance on a hard surface, so if you have removable rugs, get those out of the way too.

Try to make the dance area as spacious as possible—many advanced dancers like to show off by performing complicated twirls and flips. Remove precious lamps, vases, or pets from the area. To create a good disco atmosphere, make sure there is plenty of chrome to light up the room; fill up the area with shiny metal tables, mirrors, glasses, and other metal objects, and set it all off with colored lights. If it's a Disco Christmas, hang a line of colored lights on one of the walls, or put a strobe light behind the tree.

If you're organizing the food and drinks yourself, keep things simple. A few types of snacks in mass quantities will go a long way. Always have more food on hand than you think you'll need; it invariably goes faster than you expect.

Make sure you have lots of drinks on hand, including soft drinks and the now-fashionable bottled water. If you're not an expert in mixing drinks yourself, hire a college kid to work that end. Bartending is already a required course in many east-coast universities.

A Fine Farewell

Of course, the age-old question is "How do I get them to go home?" One successful method involves three simple steps: remove all the food and lock the liquor cabinet; get a couple of people to sing "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" and open the door. Most guests will get the hint.

If anyone's blitzed, find a sober friend to drive them home.

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IBM's social leave program enabled Dr. Henry to take a year's leave to assist the fund. And IBM continued to pay him his full salary.

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