

General foot care information

Wash your feet daily in warm water with a mild soap, for 1-2 minutes either as a footbath or during normal bathing. Make sure you rinse your feet well afterwards. Dry feet thoroughly, especially in-between the toes. Be careful not to pull the toes apart too roughly as this may tear the skin.

**How to cut toenails safely**

Nails can be managed by trimming with nail clippers or by filing with a good metal file, for example a diamond deb nail file.

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You may find it easier to cut your nails after a bath, shower or footbath when they will be slightly softer. If you are filing the nail only, this is easier before you bathe or shower.

Nails should be cut straight across following the shape of your nail and make sure not to cut too short. Any thick nails or rough edges can be smoothed with a nail file or emery board. Don’t poke around the nail with any sharp instruments, only use a nail file or toothbrush to gently clear any dry skin under the nails.

The newly cut edge and any sharp corners of nails should be filed smooth. Always file away from your body in one direction to avoid tearing the nail. Never pull or tear your toenails because this will irritate the skin around the nail and may leave a spike of nail to cut into the toe.

Thick toenails that are difficult to cut should be filed regularly instead. File over the top of the nail to reduce the thickness of the nail and not just the edge. Do not cut the nail down at the sides to relieve an “ingrown” toenail as this will only worsen the condition in the long-term.

**What Skin Types are there?**

**Moist Skin / Sweaty Feet**

Sweating is a normal process and we can lose up to a teaspoonful of sweat from our feet each day!

* Wash your feet daily with a mild soap and warm water
* Use socks or tights made from natural fibres such as cotton or wool and avoid man made materials when possible
* Change socks daily and when possible, change shoes so you are not wearing the same pair each day
* For moist skin in-between the toes, this can be treated by applying a little surgical spirit regularly using a cotton bud. Avoid using talcum powder in-between the toes as it retains moisture and gets clogged up.

**Dry Skin**

This is common and can occur to anyone but is worse with ageing, psoriasis, some medical conditions or due to the effect of some medications. The skin can feel rough, itchy and tight or may crack or split / fissure. To combat this, use a moisturiser daily and rub in well all over the foot but not between the toes. Wipe off any excess.

**Hard Skin/ Calluses**

Corns and callosities (hard skin) can develop for a variety of reasons. They can be quite thick and yellow in colour. They will usually feel more comfortable if you use a pumice or rough skin file regularly (2-3 times a week) to soften the skin. A moisturising cream should also be applied to the feet daily, all over the feet, but not in-between the toes.

If these measures do not help, then you should seek advice from a Chiropodist / Podiatrist (registered with the Health Professions Council) or GP.

Avoid using ‘corn cures’ available from chemists. They contain acid to burn the skin and can cause damage to the surrounding skin if applied incorrectly.

**What measures should I take every day?**

Check your feet regularly, daily if necessary. By doing this, you will notice any issues or concerns with your feet as they arise, meaning that you are less likely to get a serious infection or problem.

Moisturising the feet (but not between the toes) will help to keep them supple as feet start to dry out and lose their natural oils as they age.

Keeping your feet warm or at a constant temperature is also important, but do not warm them too close to the fire! Warm stockings or socks can help but avoid anything too tight which can restrict your circulation or cramp your toes.

Wearing fleece-lined boots or shoes or even an extra pair of socks will also keep you warm but do make sure your shoes aren’t tight as a result. Bed socks are also a good idea when the weather is very chilly.

**Some useful tips to consider when buying shoes**

* If possible, have your feet measured by a shoe-fitter, otherwise look for foot-shaped footwear
* Different brands of shoes will have slightly different fittings, make sure to try them on
* Adults feet can also change in size and shape with age
* Buy shoes in the afternoon, as feet tend to swell throughout the day
* Buy a shoe with a fastening
* REMEMBER Make sure you wear the right shoe for the job that you are asking your feet to do, e.g. walking, running, dancing or resting.

There are 3 main points to consider when buying shoes:

**Length**

The length of your shoe is important. Allow at least 1cm between the end of your longest toe and the front of the shoe. (Remember - your longest toe may not be your big toe).

**Depth**

Allow plenty of room over the top of all your toes - if you can see the toes bulging up in the shoe, then the shoes are too tight and may cause blisters or corns on the top of your toes.

**Width**

Allow plenty of width across the widest part of your foot and especially around the toes. (Court shoes and slip-on shoes are usually too small otherwise they would not stay on the foot).

**Why a shoe with a fastening?**

Try to buy shoes with a fastening, e.g. lace, buckles or Velcro. This will stop your foot sliding in the shoe which can cause pressure by the end of the day, or even the formation of hard skin on the sole of your foot.

Often people have one foot slightly larger than the other so always fit to your largest foot. A fastening will help the shoe stay on the smaller foot.

**What should the shoe be made of?**

Natural fibre materials such as leather or suede are best for the upper of shoes because they are supple, absorb moisture and allow air to flow around the feet.

Microcellular or crepe soles are much better than leather for the sole of a shoe as they help to cushion the feet.

**Verruca**

Verrucae are plantar warts that commonly occur on the soles of the feet or around the toe area caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)

**NB: Essex Partnership University Trust is not commissioned to treat Verrucae; this will need to be carried out by a private Chiropodist / Podiatrist (registered with the Health Professions Council). Alternatively if the problem is severe or your foot is at risk, you GP can refer you to dermatology for an opinion.**