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Our Top 6 Tips to Help Prevent Skin Cancer in Your Feet



May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month, and we want our patients to be aware of the dangers of skin cancer of the foot and ankle. The last place that we think of when applying sunscreen is our feet. But our feet are vulnerable to skin cancer just like the rest of our bodies, even under the toenails and on the soles!

Other factors besides sun exposure can cause skin cancer such as genetics, chronic ulceration, environmental factors such as chemical burns and viral infections such as HIV and human papillomavirus (HPV).

Melanoma is the most deadly form of skin cancer and can appear on the tops of the feet, the soles and under a toenail. This cancer digs deeper and can eventually reach the blood vessels and lymph system to spread within the body.

Melanomas can take many varied forms and appearances. Look for a spot with unusual colors like pink or red; uneven borders; size larger than one-quarter of an inch. This type of cancer can masquerade as an ingrown nail, bruise, plantar wart, ulcer or blood blister.

6 Tips to Prevent Skin Cancer

1. Early detection is very important and can even save your life! Inspect your skin – feet too – for any irregularity. Aim for a careful examination once a month and use a mirror to see difficult spots such as the bottoms of your feet. If you notice anything unusual, give us a call!
2. Wear a sunscreen of SPF 30 or more when out of doors, and don't forget to apply to the tops and bottoms of feet, ankles and even between the toes.
3. Reapply sunscreen after sweating or swimming.
4. Wear UV-absorbent sunglasses.
5. Avoid picking up viruses by covering your feet in public places like pools, spas, locker rooms and gyms.
6. Stay out of the sun when its rays are most intense – between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Could That Pain in Your Foot Be Arthritis?



You may be familiar with arthritis pain that can plague your fingers, knees, wrists, neck – anywhere there is a joint. Well, that aching pain in your feet that makes it hard for you to walk or exercise may be due to arthritis too.

Arthritis, inflammation of the joint that can cause stiffness and pain anywhere, is very common in the small joints of the foot and ankle.

Arthritis in the Feet

Those joints in your feet most often affected by arthritis include the big toe, midfoot and the ankle.

The major types of arthritis that afflict the foot and ankle are:

- **Osteoarthritis.** This "wear and tear" arthritis often affects people during or after middle age but can also occur when you are younger. The bones of the joint can rub against each other when the cartilage protecting the bones of the joint wears away. Other risk factors, besides aging, include obesity and family history.
- **Rheumatoid arthritis.** This chronic autoimmune disease often strikes first in the foot and ankle. The immune system attacks the tissue that covers the joint and causes it to damage the bone and cartilage, resulting in joint deformity and even disability.
- **Gout.** A type of arthritis, gout results when uric acid crystals build up in the joints, often in the big toe. Some of the risk factors for gout include high blood pressure, obesity, heavy alcohol intake and eating foods rich in purines like crabs.
- **Arthritis due to trauma.** An injury to the foot or ankle can cause arthritis, particularly dislocations and fractures that damage the joint surface.

Arthritis Symptoms and Treatments

The arthritic joint will usually be inflamed and painful, although symptoms will vary based on which joint is affected. Look for:

- Pain with motion
- Tenderness
- Difficulty walking
- Joint swelling and warmth

If you suspect that you have arthritis in your feet or ankles, please come visit us! We will do x-rays to examine your bones and order other imaging tests if necessary. Blood tests can help pinpoint the type of arthritis you may have.

As of yet, there is no cure for arthritis, but there are many things that we can do to relieve your discomfort. Custom-fitted orthotics will help to minimize pressure on the foot and ease pain. Reduce stress on the joint by losing excess weight and switching to lower-impact activities like swimming. Physical therapy exercises can increase flexibility, range of motion and muscle strength. Anti-inflammatory medications like ibuprofen and naproxen can reduce inflammation.

In severe cases, where these conservative measures do not help, we will discuss surgery with you.

With the right treatment, your arthritis pain can be managed to let you lead an active and healthy life.

Don't Ruin Your Summer Vacation



Nothing ruins a summer vacation faster than a painful or injured foot, but a few simple steps can help keep your feet safe and injury-free so you can enjoy your time off:

1. Wear comfortable supportive shoes to the airport. You never know how long you will wait in line, how far you will walk to the terminal or if you will need to run to make a connecting flight. Loose-fitting flip-flops and sandals increase your risk of tripping, falling and spraining your ankle. Sprains should be evaluated by a podiatrist within 24 hours to ensure proper healing.
2. Wear socks with your comfortable supportive shoes. Not only do socks protect skin from shoe friction that can cause blisters and calluses, they can also keep you healthy. Walking barefoot through an airport metal detector exposes your feet to bacteria and viruses that could cause plantar warts and athlete's foot.
3. Avoid bringing new shoes on vacation. If your vacation includes walking tours, hiking or dancing, wear worn-in shoes that support and cushion your feet.
4. Check your children's shoes for fit and comfort. Make sure their shoes are not too big or too small, and ensure that they provide proper arch support and shock absorption.
5. Pack flip-flops or sandals and use sparingly. Use them in place of walking barefoot in locker rooms and around pools, where you may pick up athlete's foot, a plantar wart infection or toenail fungus.
6. Apply an antifungal cream or powder. Use an antifungal product to help prevent athlete's foot if you are staying in a hotel or swimming in public pools.
7. Place a towel on the floor before entering the shower or bathtub. The towel will prevent slipping when you exit and will also help dry toes and protect them from infection.
8. Stretch your legs and pump your feet if you are traveling for more than two hours. This will help circulate the blood to prevent dangerous blood clots in the legs known as deep vein thrombosis (DVT).
9. Consider wearing compression socks on the plane. These can help prevent blood clots and DVT by pushing the blood through the legs and back to the lungs and heart.
10. Pack a small first-aid kit. If you develop a blister, clean your foot with saline solution, apply a small amount of antibiotic cream to the blister and cover it with a Band-Aid or gauze. If you suffer a puncture wound, see a podiatrist within 24 hours for professional cleaning of the wound to prevent infection and other complications.

We wish you and your family a happy, healthy summer!

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