

Six Tips for Healthy Holiday Feet

Sore, achy feet should not ruin your holiday season. Follow these six tips to keep your feet healthy and holiday-ready.



- 1. If the shoe fits, wear it.** When hitting the dance floor or shopping malls this holiday season, do not compromise comfort and safety when picking out the right shoes to wear. Narrow shoes, overly high-heeled ones or shoes not worn very often, such as dress shoes, can irritate feet and lead to blisters, calluses, swelling and even severe ankle injuries. Choose a shoe that has a low heel and fits your foot in length, width and depth while you are standing.
- 2. Do not overindulge in holiday cheer.** Did you know your feet can feel the effects of too much holiday cheer? Certain foods and beverages high in purines, such as shellfish, red meat, red wine and beer, can trigger extremely painful gout attacks, a condition in which uric acid builds up and crystallizes in and around your joints. The big toe is usually affected first since the toe is the coolest part of the body, and uric acid is sensitive to temperature changes.

- 3. Be safety-conscious about pedicures.** Nail salons can be a breeding ground for bacteria, including MRSA. To reduce your risk of infection during a pedicure, choose a salon that follows proper sanitation practices and is licensed by the state. Also consider purchasing your own pedicure instruments to bring along to your appointment.
- 4. Watch for ice and snow.** Holiday winter wonderlands can be beautiful but also dangerous. Use caution when traveling outdoors, and watch for ice or snow patches along your trail. The ankle joint can be more vulnerable to serious injury from falling on ice. If you experience a fall, take a break from activities until you can be seen by a foot and ankle surgeon. Use RICE therapy (Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation) to help reduce pain and control swelling around the injury.
- 5. Protect your feet from cold temperatures.** Wear insulated, water-resistant boots and moisture-wicking socks to prevent frostbite, chilblains—an inflammation of the small blood vessels in the hands or feet when they are exposed to cold air—or other cold weather-related injuries to the feet and toes.
- 6. Listen to your feet.** Inspect your feet regularly for any evidence of ingrown toenails, bruising, swelling, blisters, dry skin or calluses. If you notice any pain, swelling or signs of problems, make an appointment with your foot and ankle surgeon. To find one near you, visit FootHealthFacts.org.

Keep Foot Pain Out of the Game

Many adult, teen and child athletes compete or work out with persistent foot pain that could be a sign of a serious injury. Playing with pain is often viewed as a badge of honor among athletes, but they should realize that ongoing pain after a game or exercise is not normal and should be evaluated by a foot and ankle surgeon.

The American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons advises athletes of all ages to visit a foot and ankle surgeon when they experience nagging foot pain due to overuse injuries from repetitive loading of the foot and ankle during running and aerobic activity. Athletes who ignore persistent foot pain and inflammation and continue to train are at risk for potential complications that could sideline them for months, such as stress fractures, muscle strains, tendonitis and subtle fractures after inversion ankle sprains.

If you are an athlete who is experiencing ongoing foot pain, schedule an appointment with your local foot and ankle surgeon so s/he can determine the cause and recommend treatment.



Snowboarders: Be Sensible on the Slopes

Before hitting the slopes this winter, snowboarders should know they are more susceptible to foot and ankle injuries than skiers.

Snowboard boots are more flexible than ski boots, which means midfoot and ankle sprains are more likely to occur because the boot's flexibility allows for more impact at the tip of the toes.

To avoid injury, snowboarders should:

1. Wear stiffer boots to better protect the ankles and more firmly hold the feet in position.
2. Be careful of landings while catching air. Flat landing zones can cause increased compression-type injury to the foot and ankle.
3. Make sure boots are well fitting, in good condition and are set up properly in bindings.

4. Wear insulated socks appropriate for temperatures. Consider having a change of socks for wet conditions. If toes or feet feel cold and/or numb, take a break and warm up.
5. Warm up with gentle exercise and stretches before riding.
6. Ride within one's own skill level.



Do a Midyear Performance Check on Your Children's Feet

While your kids may have made it halfway through the school year, their shoes may have not.

Kids' feet can grow up to two sizes in six months. Signs of too-tight shoes include blisters, corns and calluses on the toes, blisters on the back of the heels or ingrown toenails. Also check shoes for wear and tear since they can lose shock absorption over time.

If you need to buy new shoes for your child, choose a pair that has a little, but not too much, room for growth. Aim for about a finger's width of space between your child's big toe and the front of the shoe. Be careful not to buy shoes that are too big because oversized shoes can cause the foot to slide forward, putting pressure on the toes.

The shoes should also have a toe box wide enough to accommodate your child's feet, adequate cushioning and shock absorption. If your child has flat feet, look for shoes that provide arch support.

Schedule an appointment with your foot and ankle surgeon if your child has any trouble walking or running or has foot pain despite wearing properly fitting shoes.



Visit [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org) to find out what's ailing you or your family. Use the **Where Do You Hurt?** interactive search feature or the **Find a Physician** search tool to find a foot & ankle surgeon near you.

