

Common Foot Problems: Home Treatments

Caution: If you have diabetes or blood vessel disease in your feet, you need special care. Talk to your doctor about any foot problems you are having.

Plantar Fasciitis

If you notice pain or discomfort at the bottom of your heel, especially with your first step in the morning, you might have plantar fasciitis (fash-ee-EYE-tis). It is caused by the shortening of a band in the bottom of your foot. Stretching and strengthening exercises can help. You can also get a heel cup from the drugstore to put in your shoes to make your pain better.

Hallux Rigidus

If you notice stiffness or pain in your big toe, it could be a sign of hallux rigidus. It usually happens when the padding in the joint gets worn down, causing pain when your toe moves. This is called osteoarthritis. Keeping your toe straight in your shoe can make it feel better. Wearing a hard-bottomed shoe, such as a hiking boot, can keep the toe from bending.

Hallux Valgus

Hallux valgus, or a bunion, is caused by a breakdown of the structures that support the big toe. This causes the base of the big toe to stick out. It is helpful to wear shoes that are wider at the ball of the foot, called the toe box. Shoemakers can usually stretch your shoes if you can't find a wide enough pair.

Plantar Warts

Warts on the bottom of the foot are caused by a common virus. It isn't harmful, but it causes a bump on the skin called a wart. Most warts will go away within two years if they are left alone. If you want to get rid of them sooner, you can buy wart treatments containing salicylic acid or DMEP (dimethyl ether and propane) at the drugstore.

Metatarsalgia

If you have pain in the ball of your foot, this is called metatarsalgia. Although many conditions can cause pain in this area, most of them get better with a good pair of over-the-counter shoe inserts (one brand: Superfeet). You can also buy a pad at the drugstore to put on the ball of your foot.

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <https://familydoctor.org>.

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Onychomycosis

If you notice that your toenails are getting thick and yellow, you may have an infection called onychomycosis [say: ON-ee-koe-my-CO-sis]. This fungus isn't harmful, but it can cause changes in your toenails. It is hard to treat with over-the-counter medicine. Talk to your doctor about the best way to treat it.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

AAFP's Patient Information Resource
<https://familydoctor.org/symptom/foot-problems/>

American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society: FootCareMD
<http://www.aofas.org/footcaremd/conditions/Pages/Ailments-and-Conditions-A-Complete-List.aspx>

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