

Foot Care in the Older Person

Our feet consist of skin, bones, muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves and blood vessels. Our feet are one of the most important organs of our body. Put simply, our feet allow us get around and are constantly in use. Our feet allow us to balance our body effectively in walking, running, working, dancing and in many other daily activities. Our feet are vulnerable to repetitive mechanical stress and skin irritations due to repetitive daily usage. Foot problems get more common as we get older as years of use start to take their toll and medical problems such as diabetes, arthritis and poor circulation can cause foot problems.

Common foot problems in the older person

Common foot problems in the older person include dry and hard skin, corns, callouses, blisters due to friction, ingrown toenails, foot deformity (from birth or due to conditions like arthritis), fungal infection such as athlete's foot and fungal nail infection, circulation problems and verrucas. These problems are usually caused by inappropriate or inadequate foot care, mechanical causes (often due to inappropriate footwear), infection and underlying medical conditions e.g. diabetic neuropathy, congenital foot deformity (foot deformity you are born with) such as flat feet, etc. Many of these foot problems can be prevented through proper daily care.

Daily Care tips

1. Clean both feet thoroughly with warm water
2. Dry both feet especially between the toes (to prevent infection between toes)
3. Moisturise feet daily (except between toes which can lead to fungal infection)
4. Trim toenails straight across. Do not cut too close to the nail bed
5. Smooth sharp corner or edges of nails by using a nail file
6. Protect feet by wearing shoes whenever you go outdoors.
7. Do not apply treatments or drugs onto foot without appropriate advice (eg) from doctor, pharmacist. Many foot treatments such as corn removal pads contain acid such as salicylic acid which can burn the skin so must be avoided in diabetics and older people which poor circulation, sensitive skin etc.

Daily Inspection

1. Inspect the feet on skin colour, dryness, swelling or tenderness
2. Look out for blister, crack, sores, ulcers, corns and any ingrown toenails
3. Any unusual sensation such as tingling, lack of feeling or pain
4. If there is joint pain or deformity, prompt treatment is important

Selection of Shoes and Socks

Socks

- Use cotton socks as they can absorb sweat
- Change socks daily

Shoes

Here are some tips for making sure your shoes fit:

- Shoe size may change as you age so always have feet measured before buying shoes. The best time to measure feet is at the end of the day when feet are largest.
- Most of us have one foot that is larger than the other; fit your shoe to your larger foot.
- Don't buy shoes by the size without trying them on first. The size marked inside the shoe may not fit you.
- Walk in the shoes to make sure they feel right.
- Choose a shoe that is shaped like your foot. Styles like high heels or pointed toes can hurt feet.
- Stand up when trying on shoes to make sure there is about ½ inch between your toe and the end of the shoe.
- Make sure the ball of your foot fits comfortably into the widest part of the shoe.
- Don't buy shoes that feel too tight and hope that they will stretch.
- The heel of the shoe should not slide up and down on your heel when you walk.
- The upper part of the shoes should be made of a soft, bendable material to match the shape of your foot.
- Soles should give solid footing and not slip. Thick soles cushion your feet when walking on hard surfaces.
- Low-heeled shoes are more comfortable, safer, and less damaging than high-heels

Be more active

Walking, dancing, swimming and cycling are good and easy on the feet. Avoid hard-on-the-feet activities like running and jumping. Do a short warm-up and cool-down before and after exercise.

Regular moisturising is essential

Keeping feet clean and moisturised daily is vital. In Whelehans, we recommend Whelehans Moisturising Cream. It contains urea which is an excellent deep moisturising ingredient.

Whelehans Foot Cream has been developed by our pharmacist to treat and prevent the problem of dry, hard and cracked skin on the feet and heels. It is based on a naturally occurring moisturiser called urea. Whelehans Moisturising Cream can give relief from hard and cracked heels, itchy feet (excluding Athletes foot), dry flaking skin, peeling skin on feet, burning sensation on the feet and tired feet.

Urea has many benefits. Urea causes hard dry skin cells to "unpack" & expose their water binding sites allowing the cells to absorb & retain additional moisture. Research and clinical studies have proven the effectiveness of urea. Whelehans mix Urea with Aqueous Cream to ensure it actively replenishes moisture to the lowest skin depths. It leaves your feet soft & smooth. Whelehans Foot Cream costs €6.95 per 300g pack.

Chiropodist

A chiropodist assesses diagnoses and treats diseases and abnormalities of the feet and lower limbs. A chiropodist can significantly improve a person's quality of life by alleviating painful symptoms and promoting and maintaining mobility. Whelehan's pharmacy now has chiropodist James Pedley in store every Thursday morning. The consultation with our chiropodist takes place in a private consultation room. You can make an appointment in store or by phoning us at 04493 34591.

For comprehensive and free health advice and information call in to Whelehans, log on to www.whelehans.ie or call us at 04493 34591. You can find us on Facebook. You can also e-mail queries to info@whelehans.ie