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Don't Ignore Your Feet! Top 5 Health Warning Signs that Your Feet Can Show



In addition to being the foundation of our bodies, our feet can also give early-warning signals for some pretty serious diseases.

During **American Heart Month**, we especially focus on foot symptoms that may indicate heart disease. Monitoring your health, even your feet, can help you identify early signs of heart disease.

So, if you are not in the habit of checking your feet every day, give them a once-over and look for these signs and symptoms of potentially serious conditions:

1. **Hair loss.** Do your toes look bald? This condition may be caused by peripheral arterial disease (PAD) that affects your blood circulation. Look for reduced hair growth on the toes, feet and ankles; thin, shiny skin; purple color on toes. When plaque builds up in the leg arteries, the blood flow may be restricted. A simple pulse check in the foot will help determine if there is a problem.
2. **Non-healing wound.** A cut, puncture wound or scrape on your foot that isn't healing may be caused by diabetes. The skin won't heal properly when uncontrolled glucose levels damage nerves and cause poor circulation, so healing blood cannot reach the injury site. Numbness or tingling in the feet may also be a sign of diabetes.
3. **Small red lines under the toenail.** These lines, also found under the fingernails, may be splinter hemorrhages or broken blood vessels. In some cases, these may point to endocarditis, or an infection of the heart's inner lining. Left untreated, this infection may cause heart failure.
4. **Clubbing of the toes or fingers.** When toes appear rounder and wider than normal, this clubbing may indicate the presence of lung cancer, chronic lung infection or an infection of the lining of the heart. Clubbing occurs because of a lower amount of oxygen in the blood.
5. **Excessively dry skin.** If you apply moisturizers to the dry skin on your feet without success, you could have a thyroid problem. A thyroid problem may cause severe skin dryness. If there is no improvement with a daily moisturizer, see your doctor to have your thyroid checked.

If you notice any of these symptoms or have any other concerns about your foot health, please come in to see us right away. We can diagnose your issue to determine if it is related to your overall health or due to a specific foot problem.

How to Keep Your Feet Happy in 2020



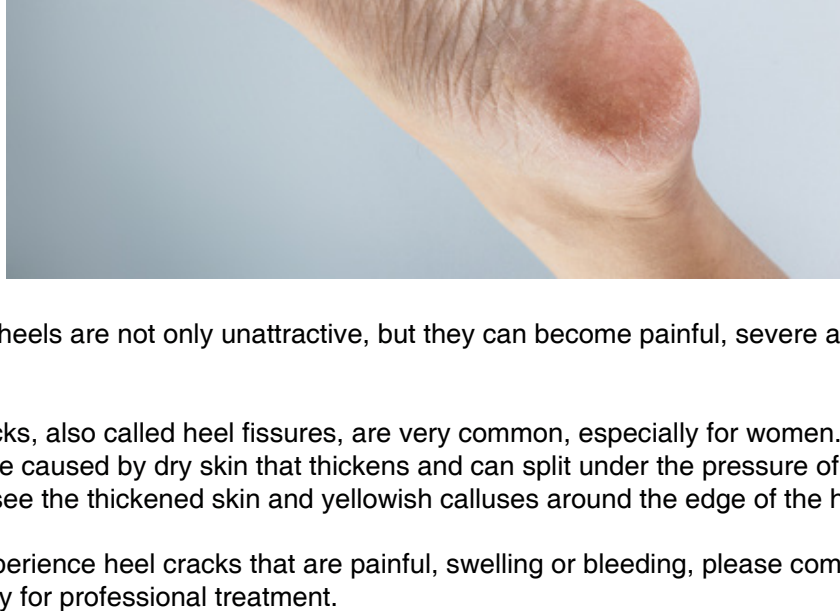
Healthy, comfortable feet are happy feet! Yet how many of us truly have happy feet that are healthy and don't hurt or ache?

You can have happy feet this year with some simple, commonsense foot care tips. Give these a try for just a month and you'll notice that your feet are smiling at you!

- Inspect your feet every day. Yes, every day! Your lonely feet are furthest from your eyes and tend to be neglected. Look for any changes in skin, shape, toes, toenails and any injury. A daily foot check is especially important for anyone with diabetes.
- Keep your feet clean by washing every day in warm, soapy water. Don't forget between the toes! Dry thoroughly especially between those toes to prevent fungal infections.
- Smooth on a rich foot cream or lotion every day. Not only will this keep your feet looking good and supple, but it will prevent cracked skin that can let bacteria in.
- Keep feet dry with clean socks every day. If your feet sweat or become damp, change your socks mid-day.
- Trim toenails straight across – not rounded at the corners – to prevent ingrown toenails. If you prefer visiting a nail salon, make sure that all required licenses are posted and that proper sanitary procedures are followed.
- Shoe choice is critical to happy feet. Do an audit of your closet and toss any shoes that are too tight, too narrow or just worn out. Invest in your foot health by selecting new shoes that are comfortable with low heels and a wide toe box. Shop at the end of the day when feet are largest.
- Protect your feet when in public areas like pools, showers, locker rooms and spas. Wear flip-flops or shower shoes to avoid picking up bacteria or fungi.

Above all, please come in to see us if you have any foot problems or notice anything unusual in your daily check. We are here to help!

Avoiding Cracked Skin on the Feet



Cracked heels are not only unattractive, but they can become painful, severe and even infected.

Heel cracks, also called heel fissures, are very common, especially for women. These cracks are caused by dry skin that thickens and can split under the pressure of standing. You will see the thickened skin and yellowish calluses around the edge of the heel.

If you experience heel cracks that are painful, swelling or bleeding, please come see us right away for professional treatment.

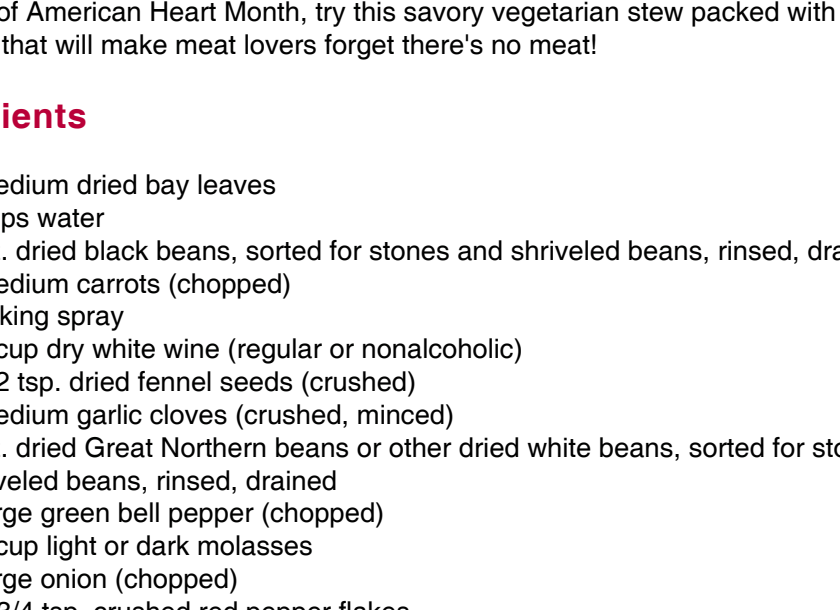
Treating Heel Fissures at Home

Minor heel cracks can be successfully treated at home. The most important step is to moisturize to help retain skin moisture. Here's how:

- Use an emollient moisturizer every day to soothe and soften the skin. Emollients help reduce water loss by penetrating the skin. Avoid the area between the toes to prevent fungal infections.
- Wear 100% cotton socks to bed after moisturizing. This will help keep the moisture in while at the same time allowing the heel's skin to breathe.
- Gently rub the thickened skin with a pumice stone or foot file. This can help reduce the thickness of the calluses and hardened skin. Never use scissors or razors to cut back skin. Patients with diabetes or neuropathy should not perform this task themselves – come see us for proper treatment.

If your heels remain severely cracked after following this home treatment plan for a week or two, please come see us for a professional evaluation. We can remove the dead skin and prescribe stronger agents to help soften the skin. A prescription antibiotic can help clear up any infection. We can also check your gait to see if that may be the problem in causing excess heel calluses.

Recipe of the Month French-Style Bean Stew



In honor of American Heart Month, try this savory vegetarian stew packed with protein and fiber that will make meat lovers forget there's no meat!

Ingredients

- 2 medium dried bay leaves
- 6 cups water
- 8 oz. dried black beans, sorted for stones and shriveled beans, rinsed, drained
- 2 medium carrots (chopped)
- Cooking spray
- 1/2 cup dry white wine (regular or nonalcoholic)
- 1 1/2 tsp. dried fennel seeds (crushed)
- 4 medium garlic cloves (crushed, minced)
- 8 oz. dried Great Northern beans or other dried white beans, sorted for stones and shriveled beans, rinsed, drained
- 1 large green bell pepper (chopped)
- 1/4 cup light or dark molasses
- 1 large onion (chopped)
- 1/2-3/4 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 3 medium ribs of celery
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 dried thyme (crushed)
- 16 oz. canned, no-salt-added tomato sauce
- 1 1/4 cups fat-free, low-sodium vegetable broth

Directions

1. In a Dutch oven, stir together the water and beans. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat. Let stand, covered, for 1 hour. Or, put the water and beans in a large bowl. Let stand, covered, for 6 to 12 hours. With either method, drain the beans in a colander, rinse, and drain again. Set aside.
2. When the beans are ready, dry the Dutch oven and lightly spray with cooking spray. Cook the celery, carrots, bell pepper, onion, and garlic over medium heat for 20 minutes, or until tender, stirring occasionally. Stir in the remaining ingredients and the beans. Increase the heat to high and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, for 2 1/2 to 3 hours, or until the beans are tender, adding water if necessary and stirring occasionally. Discard the bay leaves before serving the stew.

Recipe courtesy of recipes.heart.org



History FootNote

Hippocrates (460-375 B.C.) first described digital clubbing in patients with lung-related disease.

Celebrity Foot Focus

Will sky-high platform shoes be the new trend for 2020, according to Harper's Bazaar? We hope not for the sake of our patients' ankles!

Foot Funnies

☺ What shoes do secret agents wear?
Sneakers.

Trivia

Which President of the United States was born on the 12th of February?

- A. Washington
B. Jefferson
C. Lincoln
D. Wilson

Answer: C

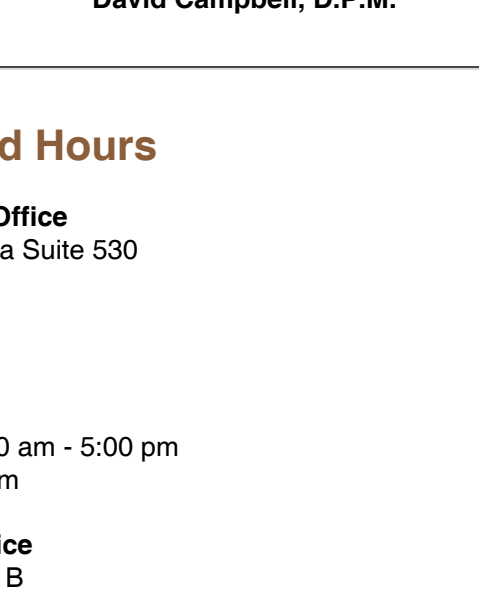
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