

10 THINGS PODIATRISTS WISH EVERYONE KNEW ABOUT THEIR FEET

You might not be lacing your shoes up right and, no, your toenail isn't meant to be that colour.

RUNNER'S
WORLD

By **Karen Cicero** Posted on September 6, 2017



You're hard on your feet, likely taking at least 8,000 steps a day. And let's be honest, how much TLC do you really give them except for an occasional pedicure? It's time to start paying more attention. Begin here: we asked podiatrists what you can do to keep your feet in top condition. Consider their advice a step in the right direction.

1/ Don't go barefoot in a public shower

You've heard it before, but it's worth repeating: gym showers and changing room floors are a big-time breeding ground for the fungus that causes athlete's foot, so be sure to wear flip-flops or water shoes, says podiatrist Dr Casey Ann Pidich, an associate at Big Apple Foot & Ankle Care in New York. Take extra care drying your feet, too, working the towel in between your toes. By the same token, if you book a pedicure, grab the first appointment of the day when the tubs are likely to be the cleanest.

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2/ Your toes can clue you in to your overall health

For example, if the hair on your toes suddenly disappears and the skin on your feet gets thinner or shinier, [peripheral arterial disease](#) (PAD) - poor circulation caused by a build-up of plaque in the leg arteries—may be to blame, says Dr Amanda Meszaros, a podiatrist in Ohio. PAD is a major red flag for [heart problems](#) or a stroke because clogged arteries in the legs are usually associated with blockages elsewhere in the body. Also look out for extremely dry skin and foot ulcers that don't heal; they may be triggered by undiagnosed diabetes since high blood glucose levels decrease sweat and oil production, points out Meszaros.





3/ Pointy pumps are the worst

Shoes that push the big toe into smaller toes set you up for bunions, bumps that form over the bone at the base of the big toe, says Pidich. The skin overlying the bunion may become red, irritated and swollen, making walking painful. Your ideal high heels: ones with a wide toe box and heels under 2 inches.

4/ The length of your toes is a big deal

If your second toe is longer than your first toe you're at increased risk for bunions, hammer toes (ones that are bent downward), and even back problems due to how you distribute pressure throughout your body, says Dr Robert F. Weiss, director of the Foot & Ankle Institute at Stamford Hospital in Connecticut. "All the weight should push off your first toe, but when the second one is longer, it rolls and flattens, causing all kind of foot problems," he explains. If you do have this condition (called Morton's toe), talk to your podiatrist about the best kind of footwear for the shape of your feet, since ill-fitting shoes make the condition worse.

5/ Toenail fungus is so stubborn

If your toenails have started to discolour or are becoming thicker and more brittle, chances are [fungus](#) is to blame. "While nails clear up in time by taking antifungal pills, your risk of a recurrence is high so I recommend a topical cream to help prevent it," says podiatrist Dr Timothy Swartz. Keeping your feet dry and changing out of sweaty socks can help prevent the fungus - which thrives in warm, moist environments and can invade your skin through tiny cuts or the small separation between the nail and nail bed - from rearing its ugly head in the first place.



6/ It's not your imagination: your feet really are getting bigger

Even if you didn't put on weight, chances are you went up at least a half-size in the past decade. Feet become both longer and wider as you age because the tendons and ligaments that link tiny bones lose elasticity. Get your feet measured at least once a year so you know your true size, suggests Swartz. Wearing shoes that don't fit properly can cause more than discomfort - it can create or accelerate a bunion or cause blisters, among other issues.

7/ People with diabetes need to take special care of their feet

If you have diabetes, check your feet daily for blisters, cuts, redness, and ulcers. If wounds are neglected, you might get an infection, which could lead to serious consequences, including amputation. It's not rare: every year, more than 7,000 Britons with diabetes lose a foot. "Diabetics who lose a foot have a 50 percent chance of dying within 5 years," warns Dr Bradley A. Levitt, a podiatrist in Virginia Beach.



8/ If you keep spraining your ankle, you're not just clumsy

Some people are just genetically predisposed to weak ankles, says Swartz. [Strengthen your injury-prone ankles with these four moves.](#)

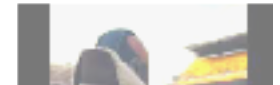
9/ You might not be lacing your trainers up right

If you have high arches and get redness and pain on the top of your feet, skip the two middle holes in your lacing and loop them vertically on the sides of your shoes instead, suggests podiatrists at the Center for Podiatric Care and Sports Medicine in New York City. You'll lose a little stability, but what you gain in comfort will make it worthwhile. See if you can improve your lacing by checking out [these ways to tie your shoes.](#)

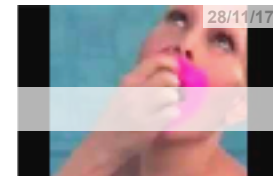
10/ Use deodorant down there

Yep, the same kind of roll-on that you apply to your armpits can help prevent the foul smells caused by the sweat glands in your feet.

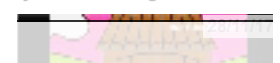
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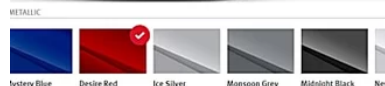


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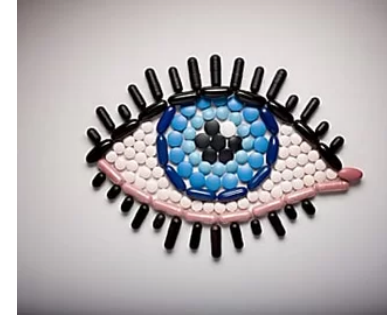
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