



Rutland Regional Medical Center

An Affiliate of Rutland Regional Health Services

National Foot Health Awareness

by Mary T. Schuh, DPM, Rutland County Foot and Ankle Center

April is National Foot Health Awareness Month, which makes now the perfect time to get your feet back in shape. Just about everything you do during the day involve being on your feet.

Keeping your feet healthy starts with a visual inspection. If you don't bend well, sit in a chair with a hand mirror on the floor. Swing your foot gradually over the mirror at an angle to view your sole. Look for hard, callused skin. Calluses do not protect, they actually can build up and kill the baby skin cells underneath causing a sore. Gently sand calluses with a pumice stone after bathing to keep smooth and supple. If you are on a blood thinner, are diabetic or have circulation problems such as peripheral artery disease (PAD), consult a medical professional to see if this is a safe procedure for you. Your medical professional may advise you not to self-treat your calluses.

Unlike fingernails, cut toenails straight across and even with the edge of the skin at the toe tips with an emery board, gently round the corners and rough spots. Avoid cutting down the sides, pushing back cuticles, or cutting out the corners—all of these habits can lead to toe infections. Healthy feet have soft, supple skin with toenails appearing slightly sturdier than fingernails, but the same color and clarity as fingernails. Discolored nails often, but not always, have fungus infections.

Foot pain is not normal. If your feet hurt, let your primary care provider know .Some foot problems may need a professional podiatry intervention to treat them, such as bunions, hammer toes, foot and ankle sprains, and fractures, ingrown toenails, tendon tears and diabetic deformities of the feet. A podiatrist works with you to determine the best treatment plan to get you on the road to recovery—from shoes to orthotics to surgery—there are many paths to reach optimum foot health.

Have your feet measured each year, by a professional shoe fitter, since sizes often change with time. When buying running sneakers, a professional shoe fitter can help determine the type of foot you have. From normal arch, under pronator, over pronator, high arch, Collapsing arch, low arch, a professional fitter can match this to the class of shoes made for that foot type whether it is shock absorbing, neutral, mild, moderate or severe motion control since sneaker makers have a different model for each.

Buy running shoes after running, with your running socks on, to get the best fit, since feet enlarge during exercise. Tracking mileage by Fitbit, on your calendar, or with a pedometer helps determine when to replace sneakers. Most wear out the midsole cushioning between 300-400 miles of use.

Increased activities require increased stretching of the joints, muscles, tendons and ligaments to prevent the "itis's"—fasciitis, tendinitis, capsulitis, and bursitis. As you increase your mileage, increase your stretching to prevent overuse injuries.

A variety of training plans can be found online such as the popular “couch to 5K.” These training programs provide guidelines of gradually increasing distance to prevent stress fractures and help you progress with achievable goals. As a general guideline, mileage should increase no more than 10% per week, to prevent overuse injuries. Don't underestimate the importance of having a rest/recovery day in a workout program, to maintaining general health. Over use is the leading cause of injury in competitive athletes.

Smokers often get special problems related to the circulation damage of smoking on the arteries of the feet. They may need to go at a slower pace, shorter distances & more gradual increase over time until after quitting smoking and time and exercise has allowed them to restore the damaged circulation as much as possible. So make a plan and implement it to have happy, healthy feet this spring and see where they can take you!