

Your
Podiatrist
Talks About

feet

WHILE OUR FEET SUFFER WEAR,
THEY CANNOT BE REPLACED
LIKE A PAIR OF SHOES

Our feet are often the most neglected and forgotten part of our bodies. Research has shown that people are more likely to have serviced their car than to have had their feet checked by a podiatrist. Yet our feet are our main mode of transport, carrying us on a journey of 128,000 kilometres in a lifetime – the equivalent to three times round the world.

Who are podiatrists?

Podiatrists are university-educated foot health professionals. They diagnose and treat specific foot and lower limb conditions including foot problems associated with diabetes and arthritis.

Why do feet need specialist care?

Our feet are very complex – they house a quarter of the bones in the body, as well as a network of muscles, ligaments and joints. They are also vulnerable to injury and disease; there are over three hundred identified foot ailments. While our feet suffer wear – by the age of fifty, our feet have lost up to half of the shock-absorbing capability of the natural foot pad – they cannot be replaced like a pair of shoes.

Feet at risk



Some feet have special needs – children's feet, sporting feet, working feet, mature feet and feet affected by disease.

- Children's feet are still forming and are quite fragile. They can be damaged easily by shoes and socks that are too small. Early examination of children's feet is a preventative measure. Uneven shoe wear; skin rashes, lumps or bumps on the feet; pain in the feet or legs; frequent tripping and falling are signs of potential problems.
- Sporting activity – walking, running, jumping – places greater physical demands on the body than normal day-to-day activities. While running, your feet can absorb up to 3 times your body weight. Not surprisingly, injuries to the foot and lower limb make up a large proportion of sporting injuries. Podiatrists understand the structure and movement of the foot; therefore, they can diagnose foot conditions, recommend appropriate footwear, and training regimens.

- ▶ Working feet can cover as many as 24 kilometres in a day as well as absorbing heavy loads associated with walking, lifting, running, and jumping on and off machinery or in and out of cars. Nearly 20% of all workplace injury claims relate to injuries to the feet and toes, and research has shown that workplace foot problems including those related to ill-fitting or inappropriate footwear are common.
- ▶ By the time we reach the age of 50, our feet have covered 86,000 kilometres, making them more prone to injury and disease. Clinical studies show that by 50, we are 80% more likely to develop arthritis in the foot and ankle as well as being 100% more likely to develop toe and joint deformities.
- ▶ People with diabetes are at a greater risk of developing serious foot problems because they are more likely to experience reduced blood circulation and nerve degeneration in their feet and legs, causing a decreased ability to fight infection. All these factors contribute to a reduced ability to heal wounds. Regular visual foot checks are vital for foot health, and Diabetes Australia recommends that people with diabetes see a podiatrist at least once every 12 months.

It is recommended that you visit a podiatrist if:

- You have pain in your feet
- You are on your feet all day
- You have skin or nail problems (ingrown or discoloured toenails, corns, skin rashes)
- You have foot odour
- You have a foot injury
- You have health problems such as diabetes or arthritis
- You have recurrent trips and falls
- You have problems getting shoes to fit comfortably
- You have lumps or bumps, bunions or misshapen toes

Foot Pain

'My feet are killing me' is a common cry, yet research shows that only a fraction of those suffering from sore feet seek professional help. A common misconception is that sore feet are normal; they are not. Just as you would visit your dentist for a toothache, you should visit a podiatrist if you suffer from sore or tired feet.

Your podiatrist is qualified to identify and treat the cause of your foot pain which could occur due to problems with biomechanics (structure of the foot), inappropriate footwear, growths (corns, calluses), disease (diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis), infection (tinea), or injury.

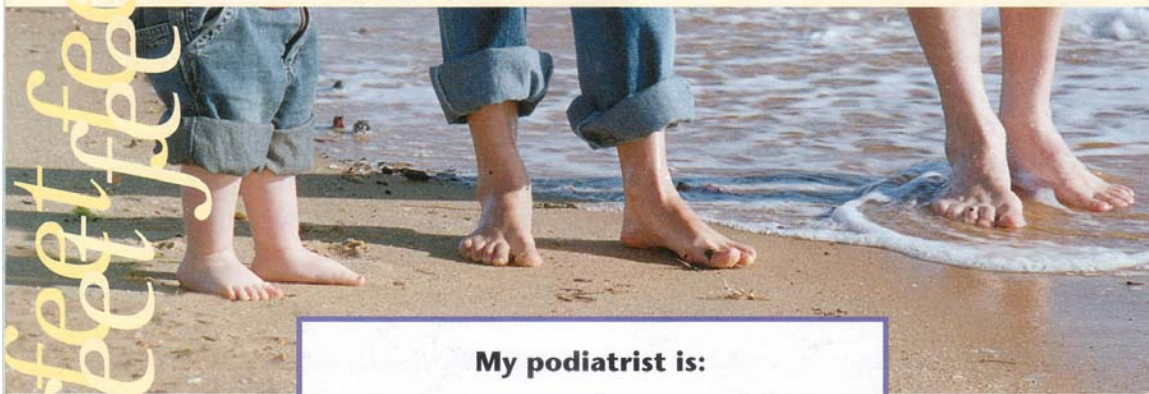
Foot pain can also be a sign of systemic disease. For example, 20% of cases of rheumatoid arthritis and 35% of stress fractures occur in the feet.

Where can I find a podiatrist?

You can find podiatrists working in a variety of locations including community health centres, private practice, hospitals, sports medicine clinics and nursing homes. Podiatrists work as part of your overall health care team and therefore consult with other health care practitioners when managing foot or foot related problems. It is not necessary to obtain a referral to see a podiatrist.

Government funded services are available in some public hospitals, community health centres and other publicly funded facilities. Many private health insurance funds cover podiatry under their ancillary tables.

Refer to the Yellow Pages™ for a list of podiatrists in your area, or contact the Australian Podiatry Association in your state, or the New Zealand Society of Podiatrists.



My podiatrist is:



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