

| Condition                                                                                                                                                                         | Who gets it?                                                                                                                                                                         | What can I do to help prevent or manage it?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| <b>Cracked Heels</b><br>Splits and fissures around the heel which can sometimes be painful.                                                                                       | They are common in people with very dry skin, those who wear backless and slip on shoes and where build ups of callus are present on the heels. Deeper cracks can become infected.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply a urea based foot cream every day. Varying formulations are available including some specifically for cracked heels.</li> <li>• Avoid applying foot cream between your toes. It may take a week or two to start seeing results. A podiatrist can safely remove any callus and advise on prevention.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Bunions</b><br>A bony lump on the side of your foot where the big toe angles excessively towards the second toe.                                                               | Although anyone can get a bunion, they tend to be more common in women.                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give your toes room to move by opting for wider shoes. Keep heel heights to 4cm or less – and vary your heel heights from day to day. Choose shoes with laces, or a strap or buckle.</li> <li>• Podiatrists can advise on measures to prevent a bunion from worsening including orthotics and footwear changes.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Athlete's foot</b><br>A fungal infection that commonly affects dry, flaky areas, like the heel – but can also occur on moist areas of skin, such as between the toes.          | Anyone. Walking barefoot around communal areas such as swimming pools or changing rooms makes you more likely to pick it up. Those with sweaty feet are more prone to the infection. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually this is dry, flaky skin on the sole of the foot or around the toes. Itchiness and red dots are also common. Sometimes it can be moist skin between the toes.</li> <li>• Over the counter treatments are easily available. If an infection persists after treatment, consult a podiatrist for assistance. Athlete's foot spreads easily so avoid walking barefoot as you may pass it on to others.</li> </ul>                                                 |
| <b>Fungal Toenails</b><br>A fungal infection from the skin can easily spread to the toenails. Over time this can cause the nails to thicken, become flaky and become discoloured. | Fungal nail infections are very common and typically start after having a fungal skin infection for a few months or more.                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fungal toenails can be very difficult to treat. Over the counter treatments are available and can be effective when only the top end of the nail is infected. If your nail is very thick or the infection has spread to the cuticle, then they will have little effect.</li> <li>• A podiatrist can advise on a range of treatments. In recent years the variety of treatments has increased and a podiatrist can discuss what options are right for you.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Verrucae</b><br>Viral infections of the skin caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). Appears as a flat and distorted or cauliflower like lesion on the foot.                | Anyone can get them but they are more common in children and teenagers.                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These viral infections will often resolve themselves within six months to two years and are usually painless. If they start to hurt or spread then seek advice.</li> <li>• A podiatrist can advise you on the best treatment to try. There is no guaranteed cure and several treatments may be required. Some treatments are available over the counter at the pharmacy and others via a podiatrist.</li> </ul>                                                      |

If you cannot manage your feet at home, it's time to see an HCPC registered podiatrist

rcpod.org.uk



## Your Guide to General Footcare

### Who we are:

The Royal College of Podiatry is the academic authority for podiatry in the UK, and the professional body for the UK's registered podiatrists. We provide information to the public, media and health organisations as well as professional and trade union support for podiatrists in the UK.

**Further foot health information:** The Royal College of Podiatry website [www.rcpod.org.uk](http://www.rcpod.org.uk) provides a wealth of information on common foot conditions and general foot health advice.

## What is Podiatry?

Podiatry is health profession that specialises in the assessment, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of complications of the foot and lower limb. A podiatrist can give you advice about foot care, gait analysis and on the best footwear for you and your family. Podiatrists are educated to degree level and are regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

## When do I need to see a podiatrist?

### You should visit a podiatrist if:

- **Your feet hurt** - they will assess your condition and advise you on the best treatment.
- **Your symptoms are getting worse** - a problem isn't improving naturally, or within three weeks of self-care.
- **You want to prevent foot problem** - a regular foot check can help keep your feet healthy.

## How do I get an appointment with a podiatrist?

Podiatrists are essential healthcare providers and are able to work safely throughout all levels of restrictions during the pandemic. Some podiatrists are also able to offer virtual consultations where they deem it appropriate. There are different ways to see a podiatrist, and may depend on where you live:

## Via your local NHS

In some areas you may be able to self-refer and in others a GP referral is required. Check with your local NHS for information. Podiatry services are continuing throughout national restrictions, but local services may vary. You can also search at NHS Choices for a podiatrist in England, [nhs.uk](https://nhs.uk) in Northern Ireland or via your local NHS Trust/ Health Board website in Scotland or Wales. If you have a long-term medical condition such as diabetes or poor circulation and are at risk of complications may be eligible for NHS podiatry services. Your GP can advise you.

## Visit your local independent practice podiatrist

It's important to find a professional who is registered with the HCPC, which is the UK-wide regulatory body. Use the tool on our website to find a podiatrist near you:

[rcpod.org.uk/find-a-podiatrist](https://rcpod.org.uk/find-a-podiatrist)

# Top tips to help prevent foot problems

Follow our simple steps to help keep your feet in tip-top shape and reduce your risk of developing any problems.

## 1. Wash your feet every day

Use warm, soapy water and take care to dry your feet well, especially between your toes - this will help to prevent fungal infections, such as athlete's foot.

## 2. Keep your feet moisturised

If the skin on your feet is dry, put moisturiser on your feet before you go to bed, avoiding between the toes (this can lead to fungal infections).

## 3. Wear the right footwear

It's important to make sure your shoes are the right size for your feet. Buy footwear in the afternoon when your feet are at their largest. Get your feet measured if you are unsure of your size. While at home for longer periods of time, try to avoid unsupportive footwear such as slippers.

## 4. Check your feet regularly

Giving your feet the once over every week will help you to spot any possible problems quickly.

## 5. Pay attention to your socks

Wear well-fitting socks and change them every day to avoid sweaty feet.

## 6. Trim your toenails

Use proper nail clippers - and cut them straight across, not too short and not down at the corners, as this can lead to ingrowing toenails. If you can't cut your nails, try filing them once or twice a week instead.

## 7. Rotate your shoes

Try not to wear the same shoes two days in a row, to reduce your chances of developing a fungal infection.

## 8. Do regular calf stretches

Get into a routine of doing these every day to keep your feet supple.

## 9. Vary your heel height

Keep high heels for special occasions, as regular use can damage your feet.



| Condition                                                                                                                                                                          | Who gets it?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | What can I do to help prevent or manage it?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| <b>Heel pain</b><br>Can be debilitating, affecting walking and posture. The most common cause is plantar fasciitis, when the ligament that runs under the heel becomes swollen.    | Can affect anyone at any age but is most common in those in their 40s or in athletes. Changes to activity levels can cause it to develop.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wear well-fitting shoes, with good heel cushioning and arch support. Trainers are ideal. Avoid shoes with memory foam liners.</li><li>• Avoid walking or exercising on hard ground.</li><li>• Rest regularly and try not to walk or run too fast.</li><li>• Wear a raised heel (no more than 6-10 mm higher than normal).</li><li>• Do regular calf stretches.</li><li>• If your heel pain continues for longer than 3 weeks, consult a podiatrist to have the cause assessed and a treatment plan put in place.</li></ul>                                                                             |
| <b>Ingrowing toenails</b><br>Develops when the side of a toenail pierces through the flesh of your toe, making it red, inflamed and painful. It most commonly affects the big toe. | Anyone, but particularly people who cut their nails incorrectly leaving small spikes of nail behind. Some will have nails which are naturally curved and press into the sides of the toes. Sporty people and teenagers are more prone because they are likely to get moist, sweaty feet - this can make the skin around the toenails softer and easier for a nail to pierce. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cut your nails properly - straight across, making sure not to trim them too low at the edge or down the side. Leave the corner of the nail so it's visible above the skin.</li><li>• Avoid moist feet by rotating your shoes and choosing well-fitting socks and shoes made from natural materials.</li><li>• If an ingrown toenail develops you should apply a clean, dry dressing. A podiatrist can treat the ingrown toenail including those that are swollen and infected. It is best to seek treatment sooner rather than later as delaying treatment can result in longer term issues.</li></ul> |
| <b>Thickened Nails</b><br>These can appear distorted, thick and yellow, often with ridges in them.                                                                                 | Anyone, but it can be more common in older people, those who have lead very active lifestyles involving running or hillwalking, or those who have had a trauma to their nails.                                                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You may find cutting them to be difficult so instead try filing your toenails once or twice a week to help keep the length down. You can use an emery board or a nail file made of metal or crystal. All are easily available.</li><li>• Avoid using home treatments such as nail thinning products or electric machines to thin the surface of the nail.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Corns and calluses</b><br>Hard, thickened areas of skin, caused in response to rubbing, friction or pressure on the skin.                                                       | They can affect anyone but may be caused by badly fitting shoes or a biomechanical irregularity in your feet.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gently rub the area with a pumice stone or foot file when you are in the bath.</li><li>• Moisturising cream may help to soften the thickened skin. Avoid applying cream between your toes.</li><li>• Avoid self-treatment with acid based products such as corn plasters, unless directed to use them by your podiatrist.</li><li>• A podiatrist can safely remove corns and calluses and determine the cause.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                               |

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