

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

rcpod.org.uk

## What is podiatry?

Podiatry is the field of medicine that specialises in all aspects of foot and lower-limb function and health. Podiatrists (also known as chiropodists) are regulated health care professionals trained to diagnose, treat, rehabilitate and prevent conditions and complications of the foot and lower limb. They also prevent, manage and correct foot irregularities, relieve pain, treat infection and keep people of all ages mobile and active.

## When do I need to see a podiatrist?

In many cases, following our self-care tips may help the problem improve.

You should visit a podiatrist:

- If your feet or lower limbs hurt – your podiatrist will assess your condition and advise you on the most appropriate treatment.
- If the problem does not improve – on its own or within three weeks of self-care.
- For prevention – a regular foot check can help keep feet healthy.

## Finding a podiatrist – put your feet in safe hands

If you have foot pain or problems, put your feet in safe hands and see an HCPC registered podiatrist.

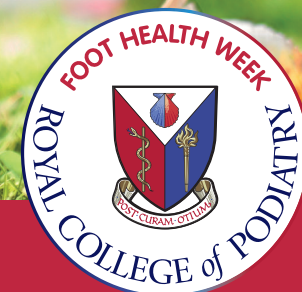
Find a registered podiatrist near you in your local high street or visit [www.rcpod.org.uk/find-a-podiatrist](http://www.rcpod.org.uk/find-a-podiatrist). You can also search at NHS Choices for podiatrist/chiropodist in England, [niddirect.gov.uk](http://niddirect.gov.uk) in Northern Ireland or via your local NHS trust/board website in Scotland or Wales.

Some people who 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.

## About the Royal College of Podiatry

The Royal College of Podiatry sets academic and clinical standards, promotes research and education and raises awareness of foot health. The College supports HCPC registered podiatrists, throughout their career, to deliver high-quality foot and lower-limb care.

For foot health information visit the Royal College of Podiatry website [www.rcpod.org.uk](http://www.rcpod.org.uk)



# Top tips to help keep feet healthy

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 them well, especially between your toes – this will help to prevent fungal infections, such as athlete's foot.

## 2. 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.

## 3. Keep 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).

## 4. 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.

## 5. Pay attention to your socks

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

## 6. Check your feet regularly

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

# 5 common foot conditions and what you can do

If you do develop any problems with your feet, there are some easy things you can do to manage them and help prevent any issues becoming more serious.



Condition	What can I do to help manage it or prevent it getting worse?
<b>Corns and calluses</b> Hard, thickened areas of skin, caused in response to rubbing, friction or pressure on the skin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gently rub the area with a pumice stone or foot file while bathing, or immediately afterwards</li><li>• Apply moisturising cream after bathing as this may help to soften the skin</li><li>• If the corns or calluses are on your toes, avoid narrow fronted shoes</li><li>• Do not be tempted to use acid based removal devices without medical supervision</li><li>• If your corns are painful enough to need cushioning, visit a podiatrist for removal of the corns</li></ul>
<b>Athlete's foot</b> A fungal infection that commonly affects moist areas of skin, such as between toes – but can also occur in dry, flaky areas such as the heel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If it's affecting dry areas, ask your pharmacist for an anti-fungal cream or spray</li><li>• If it's in moist areas, wash your feet in cold water then dry them thoroughly – dab, don't rub.</li><li>• Avoid using moisturiser/powder between the toes</li><li>• Applying surgical spirit can help reduce moisture, but only use on unbroken skin</li><li>• At home get your feet out and let the air get to your toes as much as possible</li></ul>
<b>Heel pain</b> The most common cause is plantar fasciitis, when the band of tissue that runs under the heel becomes swollen. Can be debilitating, affecting walking and posture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do regular calf stretches</li><li>• Wear well-fitting shoes, with good heel cushioning and arch support</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></ul>
<b>Ingrown toenails</b> Develop when the sides of the toenail grow into the surrounding skin. The big toe is often affected, either on one or both sides. The nail curls and pierces the skin, which becomes red, swollen and tender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If left untreated, an ingrown toenail can become infected, so it's important that you:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• keep your feet clean and change your socks regularly</li><li>• cut your toenails straight across to stop them digging into the surrounding skin</li><li>• gently push the skin away from the nail using a cotton bud</li><li>• wear comfortable shoes that fit properly</li></ul></li><li>• Surgery may be recommended if your toenail doesn't improve. Depending on the severity of your symptoms, this may involve removing part or all of the toenail</li></ul>
<b>Bunions</b> A bony lump on the side of your foot where the big toe excessively angles towards the second toe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give your toes room to move – wear wider shoes</li><li>• If you wear high-heeled shoes, do so in moderation</li><li>• If you want to wear heels every day, keep heel heights to 4cm or less – and vary your heel heights</li><li>• Choose shoes with laces, or a strap or buckle over the instep</li><li>• If the bunion becomes inflamed or troublesome, see a podiatrist</li></ul>