

Personal Foot Care

Information for patients



Podiatry Department

What is this leaflet about?

Looking after your feet is important to keep you comfortable and to reduce your risk of wounds and infections. This leaflet explains easy ways to manage your feet well at home. If you are unable to look after your feet yourself then you may want to share this leaflet with family or carers.

Skin care and hygiene

Wash your feet daily and dry them carefully, paying particular attention between your toes. Do not soak your feet for more than 10-15 minutes.

Not drying the skin properly can lead to Athlete's Foot (a fungal infection of the skin). It can also make your skin more fragile which can lead to painful corns (hard skin) between your toes or breaks in your skin (wounds) which can become infected if not treated quickly. Try using a towel or cotton wool to dry between each toe.

If you have particularly sweaty feet, then applying surgical spirit between your toes a few times a week can be helpful. It reduces moisture, making fungal infection less likely to grow. You can buy surgical spirit from your local chemist.

Change into a clean, dry pair of socks each day. Allow your shoes to air dry properly before wearing them again.

Apply moisturising cream to your feet daily. This helps to keep your skin healthy and less likely to get cracked or hard skin. Avoid putting creams and lotions between your toes.

Nail care

Cut your nails straight across, in-line with the end of your toe. Don't cut down the corners or cut them too short as this can cause ingrown toenails.



Image: correct length and shape of toenail

If you cannot cut your toenails, or you have very thick or curved toenails, try filing them with an emery board or nail file once a week. Move the file over the surface and edge of the nail, directing it away from the body and towards the tip of the toe. This is easiest when the nails are dry, not wet.



Image: filing toenails

If bending down is difficult you could try:

- Sitting on a low seat or step
- Sitting on your bed and bringing your foot towards you
- Putting your foot up on a chair if you have good balance
- Filing just one or two nails each day instead of all at once

Callus and corns

Callus and corns are pieces of hard skin. They are common if:

- You have very dry skin
- If your shoes are too small or tight
- Your shoes have a very thin or worn out sole.

They can be easily managed by using an emery board or foot file to gently file the hard skin. Use moisturiser daily to soften any hard skin. Avoid filing and using moisturiser between your toes. If you develop any cracked hard skin on your heels, your pharmacist can recommend creams that may help. You should ensure you are wearing a good fitting shoe to prevent the hard skin coming back and to keep you comfortable.

When to seek help

NHS Lothian Podiatry Department does not provide a nail cutting service or treatment of corns and callus unless there is a medical need. Age or being unable to reach your feet are not examples of medical need. If you notice any wounds or infections you should contact your GP or nurse.

Private podiatrists can help with all aspects of foot care. If you decide to seek help from private Podiatrists make sure they are registered with Health and Care Professional Council (HCPC).

Check the register at: www.hcpc-uk.org

Further information:

NHS Lothian Podiatry website:

<https://weare.nhsllothian.scot/podiatry/>

Royal College of Podiatry website:

<https://rcpod.org.uk/>