



## Common foot complaints

By J.R. Stepps

### Chronic heel pain

Pain in the heels that never completely goes away does not always lead to surgery. In fact, according to the American Podiatric Medical Association, 90 percent of those who suffer from heel pain respond to non-surgical care. Many conservative treatments are available. For example, at home, you can try stretching exercises or soaking your heels in an ice bath. It might even help to change the type of shoe you wear; the heel height and a different type can make a huge difference. According to Dr. Todd Galle of the Arizona Institute of Footcare Physicians in Mesa, if the pain persists, you should see a doctor for proper diagnosis and treatment. Heel pain should never be ignored.

Evaluation would include X-rays or possibly an ultrasound to help diagnose the problem. Heel pain is often caused by inflammation and abnormal stress on the feet. Medication, steroid injections or physical therapy may help reduce the inflammation. At the same time, it is important to relieve the abnormal stresses on the foot. Controlling foot movement with orthotics – special corrective devices that fit into shoes – can provide significant relief. Outpatient surgical options are available to help relieve heel pain if conservative measures do not resolve the problem.

### Diabetes and your feet

If you are diabetic and have an open sore on your foot that won't heal, according to Dr. Galle, you should be very concerned. Galle said, "Being diabetic with an open wound puts you at risk for delayed heal-

ing, infection and potential loss of limb." Many diabetics have loss of feeling in their feet and don't realize they have a very serious problem occurring. Left untreated, this open wound can progress into a very serious limb-threatening condition. Galle advises diabetic patients to seek podiatric care immediately, at the first sign of a problem.

To avoid these potential problems, Galle advises daily foot inspections to make certain there is no sign of skin breakdown, such as redness, blister formation, bleeding or sores. It is also important to regularly visit a podiatrist as part of the management of your diabetes.

### Flat feet

Are flat feet a major concern? "Flat feet can make you tire more easily, cause ankle, knee, hip and back pain," said Galle. "Being flat-footed can impede physical performance. It can be more difficult to run, jump and maintain stamina." This condition can make an athlete prone to tendonitis, early arthritis, neuroma formation, stress fractures and generalized foot pain. Galle advises seeking treatment from a board certified podiatric physician, who will evaluate the condition and determine whether or not custom orthotics are indicated. More se-

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**"Being flatfooted can impede physical performance. It can be more difficult to run, jump and maintain stamina." - Dr. Todd Galle, Arizona Institute of Footcare Physicians**

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## We'd Like To Point Out The Difference Bunion Surgery Can Make



**Why suffer from bunion pain?** If bunions are left untreated, they become larger and cause increased swelling and pain on the top, side and bottom of the big toe.

The pain may become so great, the foot so misshapen, that you can no longer wear shoes or enjoy such things as walking, hiking or dancing. Bunion surgery can make a big difference in your lifestyle.

Bunion surgery is performed as an out-patient procedure, covered by insurance, and patients are able to walk out after surgery.



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vere cases may not respond to conservative treatment and may require surgical intervention. "Certainly, being flatfooted does not prevent a person from participating in sports, but it is important to recognize the condition and receive treatment if necessary."

### Ingrown toenails

If you have a toe that is red, swollen and painful on the side, never try to fix it yourself. "Trying to fix it yourself is not a good idea," said Galle, as it is most likely an ingrown toenail causing an infection. By attempting to fix it yourself, you might make the infection worse and prolong the pain. Galle advises seeking treatment from a podiatrist who can simply remove the ingrown nail to resolve the infection and prescribe an antibiotic if necessary.

Once the infection has cleared, at a later date, a minor surgical procedure can be performed to prevent re-growth of the ingrown nail border and hopefully forever solve the problem. "In severe cases, if the infection goes unchecked, it may potentially infect the underlying bone," said Galle. It is never a good idea to try to self treat an ingrown nail, and Galle warns people who are immuno-compromised, diabetic or have circulatory problems to seek help at the first sign of a problem.

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*Dr. Todd Galle is a board certified podiatric surgeon who graduated from the William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine in Chicago. He takes care of a range of foot problems affecting both children and adults, from bunions and hammertoes to ingrown nails and ankle sprains.*