

FOOTNOTES 2005

NEWS YOU CAN USE FOR FALL 2005

Prepare Your Feet for That Fall Hike in the Woods

As the days become cooler Americans are heading for the mountains, forests and fields for recreation. Hikers, hunters and "leaf peepers" are lacing up their walking shoes and hiking boots to take advantage of all that fall has to offer.

Those who enjoy the outdoors aren't always aware of the beating their feet can take with constant, vigorous hiking on uneven terrain. Walking up and down steep hills and on slippery surfaces puts stress on the muscles and tendons in feet and ankles. But, with a little bit of preparation, you can avoid problems such as heel pain, ankle sprains and Achilles tendon injuries.

Use the Right Shoes

Cross-training athletic shoes don't offer the support needed for hiking on uneven, steep and slippery terrain. An investment in strong, well-insulated and moisture-proof hiking boots will lessen the stress on muscles and tendons and reduce risk of injury.



A supportive shank decreases strain on the arch by allowing the boot to distribute impact as the foot moves forward. If a boot bends in the middle, don't buy it!

Easy Does It!

Hiking is like skiing; beginners should take on less difficult trails until they become better conditioned and more confident. Lax physical conditioning is a primary cause of foot and ankle injuries. In addition to stretching exercises, strengthening of foot and leg muscles as well as exercises to improve your sense of balance will improve your ability to deal with challenging terrain. And don't attempt more than your body is ready for; ease into your hiking routine before planning a long, strenuous trip.

Listen to Your Body

If you start hurting, take a break! Pain is your body's warning sign that something is wrong. Serious injury risk escalates significantly if you continue hiking in pain. And if foot or ankle pain continues even after you've rested, plan a visit to our office as soon as possible. Ankle and Achilles tendon injuries, especially, need to be properly evaluated and treated as early as possible. Left untreated, they can lead to serious problems that will keep you off the trails for a long time. ☹

Does Someone In Your House Have Diabetes?

November is National Diabetes Month, and it's important to remember that the entire family should be involved when someone in the household has this disease. Here are some ways you can help to keep your loved one healthy:

- **Plan meals carefully.** Everyone can benefit from the healthful-eating guidelines that your diabetic family member needs to follow!
- **Make fitness a part of your day.** Taking a walk together is a great way to help the entire family stay in shape, and to help your diabetic family member control blood sugars.
- **Help your family member check his/her feet.** It's not always easy to see the bottoms of one's feet. But it's very important to catch any cuts, blisters, scratches, redness or swelling right at the start, before they become a big problem.

So, inspect feet daily, and call our office at the first sign of trouble! ☹



Does Your Foot Say 'Ouch!' Every Morning?

When you get out of bed in the morning, do you feel a sharp pain on the bottom of your heel? Are your first steps accompanied by the word "Ouch!"? If so, you're probably among the millions of American adults who suffer from a condition known as "plantar fasciitis" or heel pain.

With plantar fasciitis, the pain upon arising in the morning usually eases off after a few minutes of walking around. It sometimes returns later in the day after long periods of time on your feet, or upon standing up after sitting for a long time. The pain is due to inflammation of the plantar fascia, a band of tissue that extends from your heel bone and across your arch to the ball of your foot. Walking stretches the fascia, which eases the pain for awhile.

How Did You Get It?

While the root cause of plantar fasciitis can usually be traced to faulty structure of the foot, such as overly high or flat arches that put stress on the plantar fascia, wearing non-supportive footwear on hard, flat surfaces can cause a flare-up. For example, wearing supportive athletic shoes all summer and then switching to flat-soled shoes for fall



can cause stress on the plantar fascia and a flare up of heel pain.

What Can Be Done About It?

You can try some first-line strategies at home, including exercises to stretch the calf muscles, applying an ice pack for 10 minutes several times a day, using over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medications and wearing supportive shoes. Because being overweight puts more stress on the plantar fascia, losing a few extra pounds could help, too.

If these treatments don't provide relief after a few weeks, it's best to come into our office for a complete evaluation. Heel pain can have other causes, and we need to rule those out before proceeding with more aggressive treatment of your pain. 🐾