



# Family Footcare, PC

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## Keeping Our Feet Healthy As We Get Older

Most of us don't realize what our feet have gone through over the years. They have supported us since we were 1 year old. They have walked thousands of miles. They have endured our weight every day of our lives. They have been pushed, cramped, pinched and crowded by the shoes we have tried to wear. They have endured cutting, scraping and medicated pads. Over the years our feet can wear out, causing us a great deal of pain as we mature. There are a lot of preventive measures we can take to ensure our feet won't ail us as we age.

**Here are some of the changes our feet go through as we get older:**

**Skin:** The skin is the outer covering of our foot. It should be elastic and protective. It protects us from the outside environment and infections. As we get older the skin becomes brittle and thin. It does not protect the foot as well. Skin may become dry and callused. There is increased chance for infection.

**Nails:** Nails protect the tips of our toes. They are made up of protein. They should be thin and shiny. As we mature we are more susceptible to fungal infections that make our nails very thick. Nails can become brittle and crack. This thickness puts a lot of pressure on the ends of our toes.

**Bones:** The foot bones are tensile and strong. They support our weight. They enable us to propel ourselves by walking. The changes our bones undergo is that may change shape by increased stress. They can become thinner and weaker causing some bones just to break.

**Joints:** It is the joints that enable motion between bones. Painfree motion is there when the joints are functioning properly. As we get older the joint spaces get thinner restricting motion. As motion gets worse it can form arthritis and cause pain.

**Fat Pads:** The fat pads of our feet are located on the bottom of each foot. They are in weightbearing areas of each foot. They cushion our feet as we walk. As we get older these fat pads get thinner. The bones now press on the hard surfaces causing calluses and pain.

**Blood Vessels:** The blood vessels carry all the needs of our feet to our feet. They carry oxygen and nutrients to each cell. When we need medication at our feet it is the blood vessels that bring it. The blood vessels become brittle and thinner so that not only the amount of blood reduces but the quality of that blood reduces.

**Nerves:** The nerves are the communicator between your feet and your body. They relay messages to your brain. They tell us when our feet are hurt and when our feet are too cold. As we lose our cushioning the nerves are more exposed to trauma. We can experience pain, burning, numbness and tingling.

**Now that we know all the bad things that can happen to our feet let's talk about the things you can do to help prevent these from happening.**

**First and foremost you should do a daily examination of your feet. Preventive foot care is the most important thing to ensure that small problems remain small problems. This exam should consist of inspecting the bottom of your foot for any breaks in the skin, any drainage or discharge, any bruises or pus or any swelling or growths. Look between each toe. Again look for anything that doesn't look normal. Touch each foot. Make sure they are the same temperature. Touch the tip of each toe making sure all the toes feel the same.**

**Secondly, wearing the right shoe is very important. The proper shoe should be as wide as the widest part of your foot which is at the base of the big toe. The shoe should be at least 1/4" longer than your longest toe. The toe box should not pinch any of your toes. The heel should fit without your foot slipping out of the shoe. Have your feet measured at least twice a year. Foot size can change as we age. When buying shoes have them measured in the afternoon. Your feet are larger then. If you have calluses buy shoes that have a soft inner sole and built in arch support.**

**Thirdly, take good care of your feet. Clean them daily with lukewarm water. Dry carefully between each toe. Moisturize your feet with lotion on a daily basis, but not between your toes. In winter time moisturize twice a day. Never go barefoot. Many cuts and broken toes could be prevented by always wearing shoes. Never take a razor blade or any over the counter medication to treat your corns and calluses. When trimming your own nails don't cut deep into the edges.**

**Lastly, look for any of the warning signs of trouble and see your foot specialist immediately if you see any of the following:**

- Swelling or growths**
- Wounds that don't heal normally**
- Pain or numbness**
- Pus or discharge on feet or socks**
- Ulcers or sores**
- Color changes**
- Any unusual odor**

**As we get older our feet go through a lot of changes. That doesn't mean that they have to cause us pain. Taking good care of our feet now helps us to prevent problems as we mature.**

