

SHARE THE WELLNESS TIP



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Solutions for Happy Feet



Tired tootsies? If your dogs are barking, there are simple products that can help you find relief. Consider these aids to keep aches and pains at bay.

Massage Tools

If you're struggling with heel pain, foot cramps or strained arches, give yourself a great-feeling foot rub using objects you have at home. **Try a golf ball foot massage:** While standing or sitting, step on a golf ball and roll it lengthwise along the bottom of the foot for two minutes; repeat on the other foot. If a golf ball applies too much pressure, try a tennis ball instead. You can also use a frozen water bottle or cold metal beverage can to ice the foot while you massage it.

Relief for Corns and Bunions

Corns and bunions are both aggravated by pressure from the foot squeezing against too-tight shoes. Foot and toe pads, available in the foot section of the drugstore, can help relieve mild pain. Be sure to choose plain, non-medicated pads because medicated types can cause irritation. For corns, look for doughnut-shaped foam pads. Placing a spacer between your big toe and second toe may help relieve bunions. Toe separators can also ease pain from corns. If the discomfort persists, talk with your doctor about other treatment options.

Careful Callus Care

Pressure on the foot can also cause a buildup of skin known as a callus. Many calluses aren't painful, but some can hurt when you walk. To remove calluses, soak feet and then file them with a pumice stone or callus file. If you have diabetes, however, don't try to remove calluses on your own. Instead, ask your doctor about the best way to treat them.

A More Comfortable Shoe

Shoe inserts, called orthotics, can help with many types of foot pain. For example:

- ☼ If you have flat feet, custom-arch inserts can make walking more comfortable.
- ☼ For people with high arches, custom inserts can improve the position of the foot and shock absorption.
- ☼ Heel pads and cups can treat bony growths on the feet known as spurs.

Studies show that orthotics can also relieve heel pain. One study found that a premade full-foot insert improved pain during walking better than heel cups, pads or lifts.

For Everyday Care

Some simple, regular foot care techniques can help protect feet from pain.

- ☼ **Bandages and antibiotic cream.** Everyone should make a habit of quickly cleaning and covering cuts and wounds. But this is especially important for people with diabetes because they're at higher risk for foot infections.
- ☼ **Lotion.** Dry skin can make your feet itch or burn. Use lotion or cream on your feet every day.
- ☼ **Toenail clippers.** Ingrown toenails occur when a piece of nail grows into the skin, causing pain when you wear tight shoes. To prevent ingrown nails, cut toenails straight across using clippers made especially for toes — not fingernail clippers.

Stretch It Out

To help relieve heel pain, try this stretch:

- ☼ Sit with a leg crossed over the opposite leg.
- ☼ Using the hand that's on the same side of the body as the painful foot, place your fingertips at the base of your toes where they meet the ball of the foot.
- ☼ Gently pull your toes back toward the shin until you feel the stretch.
- ☼ Hold the stretch for a count of 10, and repeat 10 times.
- ☼ Do this exercise three times daily, preferably before you take your first steps of the day.

Sources: *Physical Therapy Journal*, January 2000; National Institutes of Health