

Five-Minute Stress Relief.com

Reducing the Amount of Stress On Your Feet

Many Americans put a lot of burden at work on their feet, standing for hours at a register or computer terminal, making deliveries all day, walking from department to department in a large office building, walking long distances as part of their commute, etc. It's no wonder that people develop foot problems.

So when overuse wears down the muscles, tendons and ligaments in the feet, it becomes a matter of minimizing further damage. If only you'd known how to avoid this type of damage. So whether you have no problems now or are playing damage control, these suggestions are important ways to cushion the blow – literally.

Protection Tips

Avoid Going Barefoot

Walking barefoot exposes the foot to extra-intensity impacts on the ground. Our feet have a natural, protective layer of fatty tissue on the bottom to cushion the impact of each step. And when our ancestors walked on natural earth, it was a far different process than today, when we spend so much time walking on concrete and other hard, manufactured surfaces. You see, natural earth has a “give” to it, it's a lot softer than hard concrete (which has no “give whatsoever”).

Serious Damage

Walking on hard surfaces impacts the foot with such force that, over time, that fatty tissue is literally pushed aside and the bones of the foot receive low-grade bruising with each step. Over time, this bruising creates a low-level inflammation on the underside of the bones and a lot of pain to go with it.

So even if you're walking on the green grass, it's adding more un-cushioned walking on your feet. Remember, our ancestors did not live as long as you will. You need to think for the long haul and prevent excessive impacting. When you are in your 20s or 30s, you don't notice much difference in the surfaces, but in time, you sure will.

Wearing Protective Shoes

No Sandals

How many times do you see people wearing “flip flops” around town while they do their errands, etc. Not only are they impacting their feet excessively, put it also turns out that sandals that require you grip them with your toes can cause an irritation to the tendons in your toes (tendonitis). So using a padded shoe that attaches firmly is important.

Dress Shoes

Men's shoes that are loafers or stylish dress shoes contain very little padding for the feet. You can add padding to these shoes with a cushioned insert. Drug stores, sporting goods and some clothing stores carry different brands of cushion inserts. Select those that are designed for dress shoes. There are different grades of inserts made, choose one that is made of synthetic rubber (neoprene, etc.) that will hold up over time. If you have difficulty finding these items, try the Internet.

Women's Shoes

Flat shoes for women are often as thin in padding as men's dress shoes, so the same guidelines apply as above. High heels shoes are notoriously bad.

- First, no padding.

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Women's Shoes – continued

- Second, the raised heel is a waiting-to-happen ankle twister.
- Third, the elevation of the high heel can create lower back problems because it creates a tilting pressure on the sacrum (lower back).
- Fourth, it creates up to 7 times the pressure on your toes and metatarsal padding (upper half of foot padding on the sole, just under the toes). If you must wear heels, at least cushion them with adequate thin-style padding.

Adequate Room for Toes

Cramped toes in the tip of the shoe lead to pressure on the joint of the big toe and a crushing effect on the smaller ones. This can lead to bunions, and hammer toes – painful deformities.

Heel Pain – Plantar Fasciitis

If you stand a lot on your feet, or walk continuously on concrete/hard surfaces, you are more prone to straining this ligament in your foot. If you run regularly or participate in sports regularly you are also prone to straining this ligament (tissue that connects bone to bone), which extends from your heel through the arch of the foot, all the way up to the toes.

The way to know that you have this condition is when you wake up one day and experience pain in the heel of your foot when you start to walk. The morning is usually the most painful time because the ligament has tightened up over night as you slept. The other time of peak pain is late in the day or evening, when the tissue has been irritated from the day's activity.

You Can Prevent This Condition From Occurring

- Wear shoes having a good, sturdy arch support and adequate padding under your feet.
- Prevent excessive tightness in the calves and Achilles tendons by regularly stretching (see below).

Reducing Symptoms

- Try these suggestions initially. If pain persists more than one month, see your doctor.
- Reduce walking, stop running for exercise, and get more rest.
- Icing the heel will lessen the pain, reduce swelling and assist the ligament in healing.

Perform These Stretches Several Times a Day

Runner's Calf Stretch

Face the wall, standing at arm's length from it. Lean against the wall with both hands making contact. Step backward with one foot, aligning the back foot behind the front one. You should feel stable and supported by the hard surface of the wall.

Now lean slowly forward, flexing your arms as you shift your weight from the back foot to the front foot. As the heel of the back foot remains in contact with the floor, you should feel a stretching of the calf muscle and Achilles tendon. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds, do not bounce, just hold continuous pressure. Then repeat entire process with the opposite foot in the back position.

For additional stretch, move the back foot further away from the wall. However do not over do it, by putting excessive pressure on the back foot. Too much pressure can further injure the ligament.

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Towel Stretch

Sit on the floor with your legs extended forward. Wrap a towel around the top half of one foot and grasp the ends of the towel in each hand. Using your arms only, pull the top of the foot towards you. You should feel stretching in the arch of the foot, where the plantar ligament is located.

Preventing Vascular Problems

Regular stretching of the legs and feet is good for the blood circulation in these areas and can be preventative of serious problems. If you experience cramping in the legs or feet, if you feel pressure or pain in your legs when you're lying down, or if you feel burning or tingling sensations, see your doctor at once. All of these symptoms could indicate circulatory or diabetic problems.

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