



Spring is in the air, but is it in your step? Your feet have been tucked away for months, swathed in socks, suffocated in shoes; desperate to escape!

FOOT FACTS

■ Did you know that each foot contains 26 bones, 100 ligaments, 7,000 nerve endings (this might just explain how it's possible to be tickleish), plus 125,000 sweat glands producing an average of 250ml of sweat every day - YUCK!

■ Essential to our health, our feet are no joking matter. Our feet are what literally hold us up and keep us going. Foot issues at any age can be a pain, and as someone who has always had difficult feet I can vouch for this; wide feet, blister prone and sporting a Hallix Rigidus and apparently there may be worse to come!

■ Feet change with age; 80% of older people have issues with theirs, ranging from bunions, corns, calluses and feet lengthening and widening. The skin also changes with reduced blood supply making them drier and more prone to cracking and splitting, resulting in them being more susceptible to infection.

■ The good news doesn't stop there either! If you are one of the 15-20% of people living with diabetes, good foot care is even more important to avoid foot ulcers. Diabetics suffer from neuropathy, which damages the nerves making them tender and painful, but it also means that sufferers are not able to feel if they have any injury or damage to their feet, putting them more at risk. This often results in amputations.

■ Good foot care is essential but age makes it harder for people to maintain this, being unable to bend due to illness or flexibility, and not able to hold scissors or clippers due to arthritic hands, as well as not being able to see what to do through visual impairment.



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Caring for your feet

Ideally in a home or residential care, feet should be washed thoroughly and fresh socks or stockings daily. In reality this is often not the case. If you care for someone please do not use talc as it clogs the pores and may cause friction. It also dries the skin, which already requires daily moisturising to keep it supple and healthy.

■ Whilst it might seem sensible to wear comfortable slippers, it's recommended that well-fitted, sturdy, low-heeled shoes be worn (Age Concern 2007) They should provide grip and support the ankle, reducing the risk of falls for elderly people. Loose slippers are a trip hazard and should be avoided.

■ Good foot care enables elderly people to maintain independence, self esteem, and comfort. Nails should be cut straight across and not too short; it does depend on care home and hospital policy, but some allow healthcare assistants who are trained to carry out foot care. It is recommended for diabetic people to have an annual foot care check and that their foot care should be provided by a professional podiatrist or chiropodist.

Your feet have carried you all your life. Take care of them as best you can and they will take care of you. ♦

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