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A foot health message from your podiatrist

grounded advice

Performance Podiatry Your specialist in foot health

Foot Health Week 2009

Are your feet killing you?

This year's Foot Health Week centres on foot pain. With evidence showing that only a small percentage of

the one in five Australians who suffer from foot pain consult a podiatrist it does deserve attention.

Foot Health Week is an Australasian Podiatry Council led initiative promoting the importance of foot health within the community.

practitioners.

Podiatrists are tertiary qualified front line health professionals trained to deal with the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of medical and surgical conditions of the feet and lower limbs. The complex way feet work and the wide range of foot problems demand professional expertise to assess and manage the causes of foot pain.

If your feet are killing you - old or young - contact your podiatrist!

Untreated foot pain health risk for young Australians

A recent study found one in five Australians suffer from foot pain and a disproportionate number of men aged 20-34 years leave it untreated.

It can be a serious matter. Foot pain can reflect medical problems that may have serious health consequences.

A perception that podiatry is only for older people could be why many younger people are unaware of podiatry services. This study suggested that a lack of publicly funded podiatry services for people without chronic diseases could also be a factor.

The President of the Australasian Podiatry

Council has called for a national campaign to raise awareness about podiatry services within communities and among general



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The older person and foot pain

Falls among the elderly living at home are frequent and linked to poor foot function and to foot pain in particular.

As you get on in years you are more likely to have bunions, toe deformities, numbness, and poor toe strength. With foot pain you are much more likely to suffer multiple falls.

Older people who ignore their feet do so at their peril. Some dismiss foot pain and foot problems as symptoms of ageing that just have to be accepted. In fact, people with these types of problems – bunions, deformities, poor toe strength, or who experience numb feet and/or foot pain – need to seek treatment.

Heel pain – what can be done?

Heel pain is a common foot problem. Early treatment might involve exercise and shoe recommendations, taping or strapping and anti-inflammatory medication. Taping or strapping supports the foot, placing stressed muscles in a restful state and preventing stretching of the plantar fascia (the long band of tissue that connect the heel and ball of the foot). Other physical therapies may also be used, including ice-packs

From pain to gain

When Chris Wigell

won the Short Course World Triathlon Championships in August 2009, the first person he thanked was his podiatrist.

Chris's debilitating foot pain, which was subsequently diagnosed as stress fractures, had appeared 18 months earlier just before the National Cross Country Championships.

"But after the meet my feet were throbbing, it was horrifically painful, I almost couldn't walk.

"I was about to go to a GP; when you get pain you just immediately assume that you need to see a doctor. I had no idea what a podiatrist did; I thought they cut toenails for older people - my uncle has one who does that for him.

"They actually work together. My podiatrist, Michael Nitschke, sent me to a GP to get a referral for an MRI and other tests.

"After the diagnosis Michael told me I had to have three months off for the healing process. I was depressed because three months is a lot of time to not be training especially in an endurance sport. But it worked.

"I've had other foot pain problems since but Michael's able to fix them very quickly; he identifies the little things so that we can prevent big things from happening".



and ultrasounds.

These treatments will effectively treat the majority of heel and arch pain without the need for surgery.

Indeed, only a relatively few cases of heel pain require surgery. If required, surgery is usually for the removal of a spur (a bony growth under the heel bone), but also may involve release of the plantar fascia, removal of a bursa (a small irritated sack of fluid at the back of the heel), or a removal of a neuroma or other soft-tissue growth.

Your recovery will depend on the cause of your heel pain and your individual health. If you are suffering with a heel spur or plantar fasciitis, it normally takes about six to eight weeks for a healthy individual to fully recover. That is when the injured area is fully rested or properly strapped.

Care for your feet

Our feet are often the most neglected and forgotten part of our bodies.

Research has shown that people are more likely to have serviced their car than to have had their feet checked by a podiatrist. Yet our feet are our main mode of transport, carrying us on a journey of 128,000 kilometres in a lifetime – the equivalent to three times round the world.

So if your feet are killing you, or just causing discomfort, see a podiatrist.

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