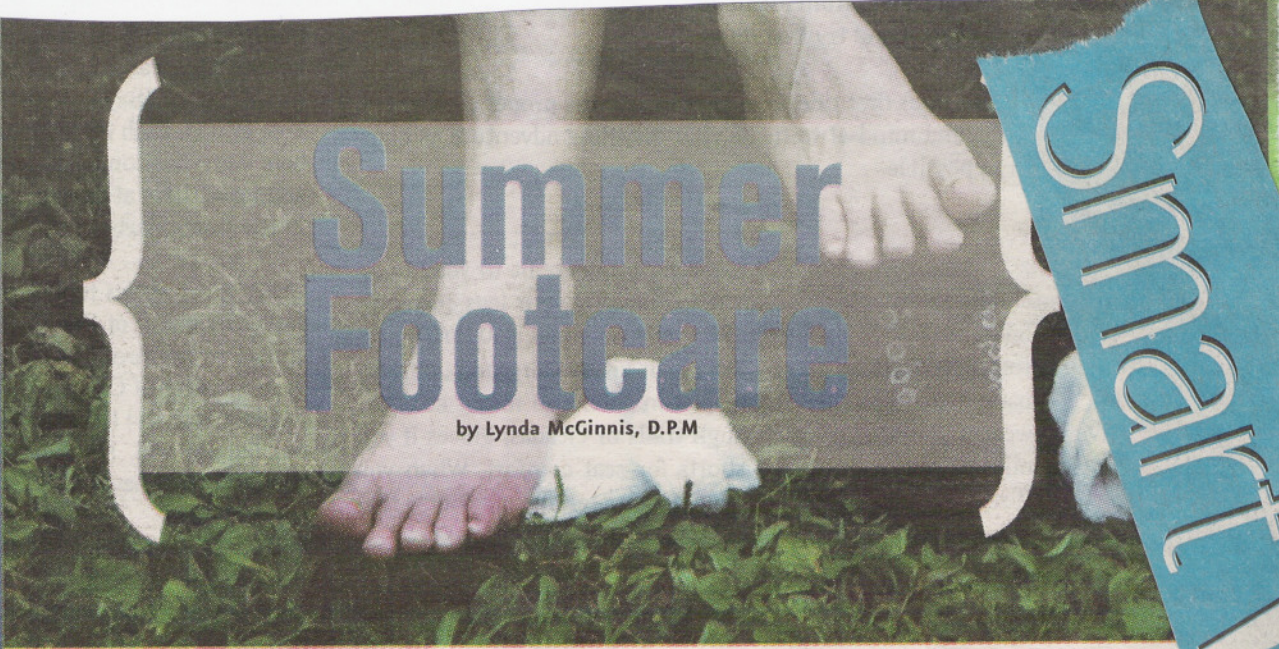




Summer Footcare

by Lynda McGinnis, D.P.M

Smart Woman
July 2004

Ah those crazy days of summer! While you are out enjoying summer activities, don't forget your feet. They need some TLC too! Summer activities can be tough on feet, especially if you forget to care for them, as well as the rest of your body.

Soaking up the sun

Summer sun means sun exposure. All skin needs sunscreen, including feet. Forgetting to use sunscreen on your feet will leave them burned, swollen and painful. A severe case of sunburned feet makes walking too painful to attempt. Remember to reapply sunscreen if you walk in water or somehow wash off the first application.

Smooth operation

While we take great measures to moisturize our faces and torsos, we often forget to do the same for our feet. Some moisturizing cream on the feet and heels daily helps after sun exposure. Plus, it also helps soften those dry rough heels that come as a result of wearing backless shoes so much.

Warmer weather enables us to wear sandals and flip flops throughout the day. This allows the feet to air out and it puts less pressure on the toes. Heels tend to get rough and dry without a closed shoe though. Backless shoes, even clogs, make the heels get rough. If you frequent a swimming pool, walking on the cement further roughens the skin of the heels. Not to mention, that it often causes peeling of the skin of the big toes as well. And, chlorine in

the pool water is drying to the skin as well. Although dry skin is more of a winter problem, use of a moisturizing cream at the end of the day is a good idea year round.

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Staying dry

Another skin problem common in summer is athlete's foot. This fungus infection of the skin becomes more common when feet perspire more. These days, we tend to wear shoes — especially dress shoes — without stockings. Although stockings are hot in the summer, wearing shoes without them may increase the risk of fungus. It is a good idea to place shoes outside in the sunshine periodically to dry them well and kill fungus which may be harbored in the shoe materials. Keeping feet dry with powder also helps. If excessive perspiration is a problem, visit your podiatrist to aggressively treat this problem.

Looking good

The general appearance of the feet is more of a concern in the summer when feet are more visible. Pedicures are commonly sought to improve foot appearance. This is a good way to pamper feet, as long as the pedicurist is knowledgeable and the instruments used are very clean. Many women pre-

fer nail polish in the summer. This should be removed periodically to avoid discoloration of the nails, which happens after long periods of constant polishing of nails. The discoloration may cause the nails to look as though they are fungus infected, even when they are not.

Feeling good

And let's not forget those "crooked" feet and toes. Bunions and hammertoes make closed shoes more uncomfortable to wear. The more open style of summer shoes certainly helps these kinds of problems. Removing the pressure on the toes often relieves the pain of corns and calluses. However, wearing sandals or flip-flops all day causes more fatigue of the feet. This can often cause worsening of heel pain. If you plan to be on your feet a lot, be sure to wear shoes that give good support and cushioning. Don't put those athletic shoes away completely for the summer! You will need them for exercise, and for prolonged walking whether it is for exercise or for enjoyment. If the warmer weather inspires you to get out more and be more active, you should be careful to gradually increase your activity level. Those muscles and tendons need time to build up to a higher activity level. And the appropriate footwear is essential, regardless of the time of year. As always, you should consult your physician before beginning a new exercise program.

So let the glorious days of summer inspire you to enjoy the warmer weather, while remembering to pamper those feet occasionally too. They'll pay you back by keeping you going longer and with more comfort. **SW**

Lynda McGinnis, D.P.M., a podiatrist who practices in Lutherville, Md., serves on the Board of the Maryland Podiatric Medical Association: the professional medical association representing podiatrists in Maryland. Its mission is to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and delivery of foot and ankle health care to the general public and the profession. For more information, visit www.marylandpodiatry.org.