



Love Your Feet... And They'll Love You

How do you keep your feet in good condition? Adam Jorgensen, a podiatrist with the National University Hospital, offers some "loving" advice.

Do you know that you take an average of 10,000 steps a day? That adds up to about 115,000 miles in a lifetime. In other words, in one lifetime, you would have circled the earth four times!

Your feet absorb approximately 227 kg with every step (if you are about 50kg). You have 26 bones in each foot and together, your feet comprise about a quarter of your body's bones.



Preventing Arch Pain

According to Jorgensen, arch pain is a generalised term used to describe any pain associated with the instep of the foot. The instep is the curved area on the bottom inside of the foot. He says, "Pain can occur at different sites along the arch, at the heel, the mid-section or the ball of the foot."

To prevent arch pain, you are advised to do the following:

- Rest your feet once in a while when performing aggravating activities such as shopping or standing for a long period of time.
- Wear shoes with good support and cushioning, and simple arch pads.
- Stretch and gently massage your arch. Sports shoes are ideal because they have been most researched and are constructed with performance in mind. They provide good cushioning, good support and good stability to your feet. However, as we can't go into a meeting in our jogging shoes, Jorgensen advises, "You should wear shoes with similar characteristics. Try to get shoes with soft-cushioned soles, good stability, good fit and of course, safe to wear."

The Problems With Heels

For women, foot pain is often due to vanity as they wear high heels. Heels are said to be sexier and can "lengthen" the legs. But heels may also be the cause of pain.

According to Jorgensen, heels may cause pain because of the following reasons:

- Heels place added strain on the calf muscles.
- They increase loading and pressure on the ball of the foot.
- They force and squeeze your toes into the narrow toe box.
- They destabilize the feet as they place your ankle joint into a "loose" position.
- They narrow your base of support, making the feet very unstable.
- They cause excessive strain to your knees and lower back.

If you cannot do without your heels, Jorgensen's advice is to wear heels that are no higher than 1 or 1½ inches.

If your pain is so severe that you have to stop your daily activities, you should consult your doctor or podiatrist.