



## Foot Health Fact Sheet

# LOOKING AFTER AGEING FEET

### Did you know?

Foot pain affects one in four older people, with forefoot pain affecting two-thirds.

Ageing is a fact of life. After your feet have carried you millions of kilometres through your life, they can eventually wear down. But there are ways to keep your feet healthy as you age – through proper maintenance, care and regular check-ups.

### What happens to feet as they age?

As you age, you can lose cushioning and soft tissue fat in the pads of your heels and balls of your feet, near your toes. Like the skin on your face, there is also a loss of elasticity in the skin on your feet, making it thin and vulnerable.

Bone deformities – such as bunions or arthritis – and difficulties undertaking basic foot care, can lead to foot health issues and sometimes an increased risk of falls – which for many can have drastic consequences.

Nails also become more brittle, thicker and harder, making them difficult to trim and prone to ingrown toenails, fungal breakouts and other infections.

### Can foot problems be improved?

For older people, most foot problems can be improved by regular maintenance and care, keeping weight down, shoe modification and use of cushioned insoles.

To undertake regular foot maintenance, some elderly people have difficulty reaching their feet or have bad eyesight, so simple things like cutting toenails can be an issue – if this is the case get a family member to help or go and see a podiatrist. If you can cut your toenails yourself, make sure you trim them just short of the end of the toe, using a strong pair of nail clippers. After clipping, smooth the nails with a file or emery board, using downward strokes. It is also important to have your feet measured frequently as the bones in your feet change with age, this way you can ensure you choose shoes that fit well and are comfortable.

Taking good care of your feet as you age is good for your foot health as it helps you stay active and mobile.

### When should you see a podiatrist?

Your feet are mirrors of your health. Warning signs of health conditions can be dry skin, brittle nails, burning and tingling sensations in your feet, or feelings of cold, numbness, and discolouration. If these occur, see a podiatrist, as they, along with your GP, will be able to pinpoint the cause.

Regular check-ups with your podiatrist are recommended, especially if you cannot look after your feet yourself and you have no one to help you. Nails that grow too long can become infected and if you are diabetic – which has a higher risk factor as we age – infection can lead to more serious illness.



Find a podiatrist at [foothealthaustralia.org.au](http://foothealthaustralia.org.au)

This fact sheet is available as a download from [foothealthaustralia.org.au](http://foothealthaustralia.org.au)



# DO YOU NEED TO SEE A PODIATRIST?



## DOES THE FOLLOWING APPLY TO YOU OR YOUR FAMILY?

- Can you only walk for a short period before your feet or legs hurt?
- Do you experience pain in your lower limbs at night?
- Do you experience tingling in your feet?
- Have you noticed your legs or feet are swollen?
- Do you have cuts or fissures on your feet that take a long time to heal?
- Are you returning to sport after an injury?
- Are you uncertain about which running or sports shoe to buy?
- Do you find that you wear out the outside of your shoes quickly?
- Have you noticed your toes poke holes in the top of your shoes?
- Does your forefoot become hot and painful after running or walking?
- Do your hips hurt?
- Has pain in your feet or legs stopped you from exercising?
- Are you worried about your child's feet?
- Do you have arthritis in your feet?
- Do you experience reoccurring gouty attacks?
- Are you worried about the thickness of your nails?
- Do you have discoloured toe nails?
- Are you worried about your foot odour?
- Do your toe nails cause you pain?
- Have you noticed your toes are clawed?
- Do you have hard skin on your feet? Is it getting worse?
- Do you find it hard to cut your own nails?
- Do you find it hard to fit your feet into shoes because of your bunion?

**Ticked one or more boxes? Then you need to see a podiatrist.**

## GO SEE A PODIATRIST BECAUSE...

Podiatrists are Foot Health Experts and understand the structure and movement of your feet and lower limbs.

They can assess, diagnose and treat foot, ankle, knee, leg or hip pain.

Given your feet alone house a quarter of the bones in your entire body, a podiatrist is best placed to get you moving, active or pain-free.

## FIND A PODIATRIST NEAR YOU

Head to **[foothealthaustralia.org.au](http://foothealthaustralia.org.au)** and search by postcode or suburb to find a podiatrist close to you.



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