



For Immediate Release

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## **FOOT HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH** **Are your Feet in Good Shape?**

**Lansing, Mich.** – Special attention is given to foot health each April as National Foot Health Awareness month is observed. The Michigan Podiatric Medical Association (MPMA) would like to remind the public that this is the perfect time to determine what shape ones' feet are in.

"Foot and ankle concerns are too often overlooked by the general public," said Dr. Jodie Sengstock, MPMA director of professional relations. "Our feet are the foundation of our body. One of the goals of the MPMA is to reach out to the public to let them know that annual foot exams can lead to a better quality of life and also may help detect the onset of other life threatening diseases."

A podiatrists' examination of ones' feet can help identify early symptoms of serious disorders such as vascular disease and diabetes. Foot issues can also cause other problems throughout our body.

Normal changes to the foot as we age include:

- The foot becomes wider and longer
- There is mild settling of the arch which is seen as flattening of the foot
- The fat pad on the bottom of the heel thins out, causing loss of natural padding and spring in the step
- The foot and ankle lose some of their normal range of motion and become stiffer
- There can be some loss of balance while walking

As these physical changes occur, shoe sizes and support needs also change and must be addressed.

Some foot changes can occur that are abnormal or pathological. These problems do not happen naturally and many can be prevented, or their progress halted, by addressing them early.

Podiatrists can provide a wide range of treatments, from conservative care of the skin and nails to surgical options for advanced wounds or complications involving the bones of your feet. See your MPMA podiatrist if you experience:

- **Sprains or fractures:** Pain, swelling, bruising, and difficulty walking on the affected foot or ankle are the most common symptoms.
- **Pain that doesn't go away:** Pain, stiffness, tingling, or other discomfort that doesn't resolve quickly is your body's way of communicating. Get these symptoms checked in a timely manner.
- **Skin irritation or discoloration:** Rashes, cracked skin, and other changes to the skin of the feet can leave you vulnerable to infection and should be checked by your MPMA podiatrist.
- **Abnormal growths, lumps, or bumps on your feet and ankles:** Warts, corns, calluses, and other bumps can be indications of infection, abnormalities in your gait, or more serious conditions.
- **Changes to your nails:** Discoloration, thickening, pain, or drainage can be signs your toenails require a podiatrist's attention. They can also be signs of more serious health issues.

A yearly exam with an MPMA podiatrist is vital to tracking changes, checking for proper sensation and circulation, and calling attention to abnormalities. Early detection and treatment of problems help keep individuals on their feet and active.

**Prepare your feet for summer fun:**

- Limit walking barefoot as it exposes feet to sunburn, as well as plantar warts, athlete's foot, ringworm, and other infections and also increases risk of injury to your feet.
- Wear shoes or flip-flops around the pool, to the beach, in the locker room and even on the carpeting or in the bathroom of your hotel room to prevent injuries and limit the likelihood of contracting any bacterial infections.
- Remember to apply sunscreen all over your feet, especially the tops and fronts of ankles, and don't forget to reapply after you've been in the water.
- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water throughout the day. Drinking water will not only help with overall health, but will also minimize any foot swelling caused by the heat.
- Keep blood flowing with periodic ankle flexes, toe wiggles, and calf stretches.
- Some activities at the beach, lake, or river may require different types of footwear to be worn, so be sure to ask the contact at each activity if specific shoes are needed. To be safe, always pack an extra pair of sneakers or protective water shoes. If your shoes will be getting wet, they should be dried out completely before your next wearing to prevent bacteria or fungus from growing.
- In case of minor foot problems, be prepared with the following on-the-go items:
  - Flip flops—for the pool, spa, hotel room, and airport security check points
  - Sterile bandages—for covering minor cuts and scrapes
  - Antibiotic cream—to treat any skin injury
  - Emollient-enriched cream—to hydrate feet
  - Blister pads or moleskin—to protect against blisters
  - Motrin or Advil (anti-inflammatory)—to ease tired, swollen feet
  - Toenail clippers—to keep toenails trimmed
  - Emery board—to smooth rough edges or broken nails
  - Pumice stone—to soften callused skin
  - Sunscreen—to protect against the scorching sun
  - Aloe Vera or Silvadene cream—to relieve sunburns

To find an MPMA podiatrist near you, visit [www.mpma.org](http://www.mpma.org).

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**About the MPMA:**

The Michigan Podiatric Medical Association (MPMA) has been dedicated to serving and protecting the public's podiatric health and maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct among its members for over 100 years. The four main objectives of the organization are: to improve the quality of foot care; to promote the importance of foot health among the general public and health care professionals throughout the state; to increase awareness of the art and science of podiatric medicine and surgery; and to provide continuing medical education to podiatrists. [www.mpma.org](http://www.mpma.org)

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