

FOOTNOTES 2002

N E W S Y O U C A N U S E

FALL 2002

Is Your Job Hard on Your Feet?

Every day, millions of Americans subject their feet to stress and trauma from the normal performance of their jobs. Many occupations are hard on the feet, and visits to our office for work-related foot problems are on the rise.

Years ago, movies and television stereotyped police officers and mailmen for complaining that their feet hurt. Such characterizations weren't far from the truth as they and others—industrial workers, airline flight attendants, retail clerks and teachers—normally suffer from sore feet after spending eight hours a day or longer walking and standing. Not surprisingly, these workers can have chronic foot disorders, such as heel pain (plantar fasciitis), hammertoes, bunions and blisters, which occur from repetitive stress and may be aggravated by wearing inappropriate footwear.

For secretaries, teachers and flight attendants, workplace rules often mandate dress shoes that can worsen the impact of repetitive stress. As a result, we regularly treat them for heel pain, bunions and stress fractures.

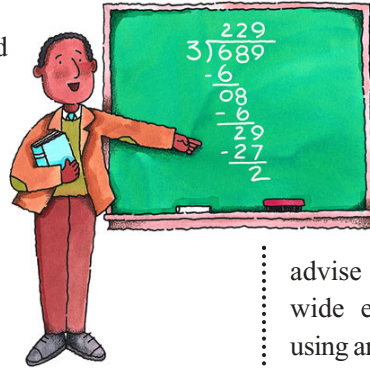
For manufacturing and warehouse workers, safety regulations may require wearing steel-toed boots or shoes. While this protective footwear prevents injuries from industrial accidents, the rigid toe box that guards against traumatic incidents also is responsible for chronic foot problems experienced by many industrial employees. Toe irrita-

tion, heel pain and Achilles tendon stress are associated with steel-toed shoes. To relieve toe discomfort, some workers opt for shoes that have more room in the toes but are too big. Over time, the poor-fitting shoes put too much pressure on the heels and lead to plantar fasciitis and Achilles problems.


Most industrial workers would benefit from protective shoe attachments that can be strapped onto the toe box of a flexible work shoe. These attachments provide the necessary protection and are much better for your feet than steel-toed shoes.

Orthotics (custom shoe inserts) provide excellent support and relief from repetitive stress. They also can correct biomechanical irregularities, realign joints, and cushion the daily pounding on the feet. Orthotics also help prevent complications, such as pain in the lower back, knees and hips that result from bad posture related to foot discomfort. In some cases, surgery is recommended for treatment of plantar fasciitis and other problems when conservative treatment doesn't provide meaningful relief.

For those who work on their feet all day, we advise you to evaluate your footwear choices to be sure they are



comfortable and appropriate for your occupation. If practical, cushioned athletic shoes are highly recommended. For employees who must wear formal business attire, we advise wearing dress shoes that are wide enough and also recommend using arch supports or orthotics.

The bottom line is that, if your job keeps you on your feet all day, don't just accept foot pain as one of the hazards of your profession. When left untreated, painful feet can cause even greater problems with knees, hips and backs. If changing the type of shoes you wear doesn't alleviate your pain, make an appointment with our office for an evaluation. 

Did You Know?

According to the U.S. Government Centers for Disease Control, diabetes is the leading cause of lower extremity amputations. About 82,000 people have diabetes-related leg and foot amputations each year, accounting for more than 60% of non-traumatic lower-limb amputations. The CDC estimates that comprehensive foot care programs can reduce these amputation rates by up to 85%. If you or a family member have diabetes, be sure to make regular appointments with our office for a thorough foot exam.

Indoor Sports Can Cause Injuries

With cooler weather on the way, many people shift their focus to indoor sports. With the increasing availability of indoor courts, basketball, volleyball, and even tennis are being played on these hard surfaces, raising the risk of injuries to the feet and ankles.

One of the most frequently encountered injuries is ankle sprain. This can be caused by the fast, lateral movements of these court sports, or, especially in basketball, from stepping on a competitor's foot.

Stress fractures may result from the shock of feet landing on hard surfaces. These small but troublesome fractures can be hard to detect, and many times people continue to play with the pain, delaying diagnosis and treatment.

Another common injury site is the heel. Heel pain can indicate a plantar fascia injury or bone spur. The plantar fascia is a thin, very strong tissue band that supports the




arch, stretching from the heel to the ball of the foot. Over time and with repeated shocks, micro-events can occur and cause the fascia to tear from the heel, resulting in bone spurs.

We frequently see injuries to the Achilles tendon that could have been prevented by appropriate stretching and warm-ups. Achilles and calf stretches are crucial to those playing court sports.

Children sometimes think it's a sign of weakness to leave the game

when pain occurs. But youth sports can often cause damage to the growth plate, the area at the ends of the bones that allow growth to full adult size. These injuries, if not properly diagnosed and treated, can lead to permanent deformity. Parents are cautioned to not allow their children to continue playing sports when limping or complaining of pain.

The bottom line is, athletes of any age shouldn't continue playing with foot or ankle pain. Contact our office for an appointment so that the injury can be diagnosed and treated, therefore avoiding long-term problems. 

Court Sports Shoe Tips

- Buy quality athletic shoes and replace them frequently.
- Buy the right shoe for your sport. For example, running shoes don't have the lateral support needed for basketball.
- Assure that shoes offer appropriate arch support, or use shoe inserts.