



# WELLNESS WORKS....

## at Brain Injury Community Re-entry (Niagara) Inc.

A Publication from Brain Injury Community Re-entry Niagara's Wellness Works Committee

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### The Evolution of Foot Problems

The first human being stood upright about one million years ago. Then when our feet took on a double load, they freed our hands for other things and civilization was born. With it came shoes – first, simple skin sandals that protected feet from cold and injury. But since those early times, shoes have more often been worn for status and style than comfort and function.

Early Greek and oriental actors used platform shoes to make the main character on stage stand above the supporting players. In sixteenth-century England, male dandies wore shoes with extremely pointed toes. And although it nearly crippled them, years ago upper-class Chinese women bound their feet so they could wear tiny shoes – a sign of being well bred!

Today's high heels are almost as rough on modern women's feet, so it's no surprise that 80% of all foot problems occur in women.

But men's feet haven't fared too well either. The stresses and inactivity of contemporary life often lead to obesity. And if those extra pounds weren't enough to make a pair of feet ache, the out-of-shape, weekend athlete doesn't always wear the right shoes for the right activity. The result, often as not, is a foot problem or two. And wearing improper footwear on the job not only causes painful problems for the worker, but contributes to thousands of hours of downtime – which translates into the loss of millions of dollars – in industry each year.

Fortunately most foot problems can be prevented.



### General Foot Care Tips

#### For all Feet

- Wash your feet daily. Rinse off all soap and dry thoroughly, especially between toes.
- Trim nails straight across, and not too short. Don't cut out or dig at corners.
- Do not trim, shave, or use over-the-counter medicines to dissolve corns or calluses.
- Wear clean socks or stockings, changed daily. Don't wear any that are too short or too tight.
- Wear shoes that fit. (See [\*Finding the Right Shoes For You.\*](#))

Some people's feet sweat more than others, and are more prone to athlete's foot. These tips may help:

- Wear shoes made of leather or canvas – not synthetics. Sandals are good.
- Switch shoes from day to day.
- Use foot powder.
- See your doctor if severe problems persist.



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## FOOT CARE



### Foot Care Fact

- 3 out of 4 Americans experience serious foot problems in their lifetime.
- The foot contains 26 bones, 33 joints, 107 ligaments and 19 muscles.
- ¼ of all the bones in the human body are down in your feet. When these bones are out of alignment, so is the rest of the body.
- Only a small percentage of the population is born with foot problems.
- It's neglect and a lack of awareness of proper care – including ill fitting shoes – that bring on problems.
- Women have about four times as many foot problems as men. High heels are partly to blame.
- Waling is the best exercise for your feet. It also contributes to your general health by improving circulation, contributing to weight control, and promoting all-around well being.
- Your feet mirror your general health. Conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, nerve and circulatory disorders can show their initial symptoms in the feet – so foot ailments can be your first sign of more serious medical problems.
- Arthritis is the number one cause of disability in America. It limits every day dressing, climbing stairs, getting in and out of bed or walking – for about 7 million Americans.
- About 60 – 70% of people with diabetes have mild to severe forms of diabetic nerve damage, which in severe forms can lead to lower limb amputations. Approximately 56,000 people a year lose their foot or leg to diabetes.
- There are 250,000 sweat glands in a pair of feet. Sweat glands in the feet excrete as much as a half-pint of moisture a day.
- Walking barefoot can cause plantar warts. The virus enters through a cut.
- The Two feet may be different sizes. Buy shoes for the larger one.
- About 5% of Americans have toenail problems in a given year.
- The average person takes 8,000 to 10,000 steps a day, which adds up to about 115,000 miles over a lifetime. That's enough to go around the circumference of the earth four times.
- There are currently more websites on the Internet having to do with foot fetishes than with foot.



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## What is a Podiatrist or Chiropodist?

These terms are not interchangeable. Both are foot specialists trained to different levels. Chiropody education in Canada is obtained through a 3-year diploma level course taught at the Michener Institute in Toronto. Podiatrists are educated in the United States at the doctorate level, often including surgical training through a hospital based residency program, totally 8 to 12 years. A Doctor of Podiatric Medicine (D.P.M.) is a highly trained specialist in care of the feet. Podiatrists are one of six primary care professions, authorized by Ontario Law to communicate their diagnosis to patients. Podiatrists are concerned with the examination, diagnosis and prevention of foot disorders by mechanical, surgical and other means of treatment. After 1993, Doctors of Podiatric Medicine entering Ontario have been required to register as chiropodists and practice according to the Ontario Chiropody Act of 1991. Podiatrists are often called upon by physicians and other health care professionals for consultation and treatment of foot problems which can be experienced by everyone from children to seniors. A referral from your family physician, however, is not required to see a Podiatrist. Examination of children's feet is an integral part of podiatry. Frequently, children have structural imbalances of the feet that may go unrecognized and can lead to other deformities and imbalances with the skeletal system. When detected early, these imbalances of the feet, some of which are related to the bone structure, are treated so that a sturdier foundation can be provided for the later years. At the opposite end of the scale, care is required for many foot problems commonly seen in seniors. This can include anything from routine palliative care of unmanageable toenails and calluses to diabetic ulcerations and infections. At this time in life, circulatory impairment, as well as degenerative joint and skin conditions are common findings. With proper care and attention to their feet, seniors may enjoy many years of pain-free foot function.

## Specific Foot Ailments:

◆ Ankle Sprain	◆ Arthritis	◆ Athlete's Foot	◆ Burning Feet
◆ Bunions	◆ Charcot Foot	◆ Circulation	◆ Corns, Calluses, IPK
◆ Diabetes	◆ Diabetic Hygiene	◆ Dry Cracked Heels	◆ Endoscopic Surgery
◆ Flat Foot	◆ Foot Odor/Sweaty Feet	◆ Foot Ulcers	◆ Fungus
◆ Gout	◆ Haglund's Deformity	◆ Hammertoes / Bone Spurs	◆ Heelspur / Plantar Fasciitis
◆ Ingrown Nails / Fungus Nails	◆ Metatarsal Problems (callus)	◆ Neuroma	◆ Neuropathy
◆ Orthotics	◆ Shin Splint	◆ Stress Fractures	◆ Tailor's Bunion
◆ Tarsal Tnnel Syndrome	◆ Tendonitis	◆ Ugly Nail Syndrome	◆ Warts



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## QUIZ I

Some famous people down through the ages have made memorable statements about feet or have otherwise influenced the way we think about feet and shoes. Can you identify the person connected with the following?

1. Which Greek philosopher said, "When our feet hurt, we hurt all other"?
  - a. Plato
  - b. Socrated
  - c. Aristotle
2. Which Renaissance artist called the foot "a masterpiece of engineering and a work of art"?
  - a. Leonardo da Vinci
  - b. Raphael
  - c. Michelangelo
3. What hero of ancient Greece gave his name to the largest and strongest tendon in the foot?
  - a. Ulysses
  - b. Jason
  - c. Archilles

*Did you know... the average person, engaging in non-strenuous activity, walks approximately four miles every day or about 115,000 miles in a lifetime.*

## Quiz II

Use these numbers to answer the following questions about parts of the foot – **5, 20, 26, 33, 100**

1. How many of the body's 206 bones are located in each foot?
2. How many joints hold these bones together?
3. How many muscles are used to move the bones of each foot?
4. How many ligaments join these bones?
5. (This one's easy...) How many nails protect the toes of each foot?

*Did you know... During a typical day, the feet endure a cumulative force of several hundred tons.*

**Answers to Quiz I: 1) B 2) A 3) C**

**Answers to Quiz II: 1) 26, 2) 33, 3) 20, 4) 100, 5) 5**

YES, IT'S TRUE... The human foot is a highly specialized structure containing 26 relatively small bones, more than 150 ligaments and an intricate network of muscles, nerves and blood vessels.