

## You Are What You Feet?

(NAPSA)—If you're worried your blood pressure may be too high, check. . . *your feet?*

No one's suggesting it's a substitute for consulting your doctor. But the National Institutes of Health does report a somewhat uncanny ability of feet to flag what could be early signs of illness. Toe stiffness, for example, could indicate arthritis, numbness could signal diabetes, and swollen feet could be a warning of kidney disease, heart disease or high blood pressure.

What's more, now that open-toed shoe season is upon us, merely having feet that look less than healthy could exact a mental toll.

"There's a psychological component to foot problems," says Dr. Marc A. Brenner, a noted author, lecturer and past president of the American Society of Podiatric Dermatology, who's aware of instances of embarrassed patients taking the extreme step of hiding their unattractive feet from loved ones.

Fixing the "unattractive" part—as in, calluses and cracked heels—isn't that difficult. Dr. Brenner says the key is to be proactive.

"Cracked heels are caused by dry skin and calluses are the body's defense against friction," he explains. "You can often address both with the right ointment and by wearing shoes that fit well." He offers these additional suggestions:

- Check feet regularly for variations in skin color, sores, blisters and calluses. Many problems are first indicated by changes on the foot's surface, not by pain.

- Remember that pumice stones can be hotbeds of bacteria growth.



**Using an exfoliating ointment can help keep feet healthy.**

- Use an oil-based ointment like Kerasal One Step Exfoliating Moisturizer Therapy every night. The only over-the-counter, one-step exfoliator and moisturizer approved by the American Podiatric Medical Association, its unique salicylic acid and urea formula safely—and hygienically—removes dead skin and creates a protective layer on feet that controls calluses, repairs cracked, dry skin on heels, and keeps skin soft.

- Trim toenails straight across. Don't cut into corners or on the side of the nail bed, as this could lead to ingrown toenails.

As a final tip, Dr. Brenner says if you feel like something's wrong, see a podiatrist. "Foot pain isn't normal and you should not ignore it," he says.

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