



Ask The Doctor

Facts About Your Feet

(NAPSA)—Many serious health conditions can present themselves in the feet, including diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. Yet only one-quarter of Americans with foot ailments see a doctor about their problem. “Podiatrists can diagnose and treat—both medically and surgically—many problems or conditions affecting the foot and ankle,” said American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) president Dr. Kathleen Stone. To help you protect your health, podiatrists answer common foot care questions:

Q. What can podiatrists treat?

A. Chronic conditions such as heel pain plus foot and ankle conditions of people with diabetes, arthritis, obesity, heart disease and peripheral arterial disease. These can lead to serious complications that may be avoided with proper treatment.

Q. If I have diabetes, should I see a podiatrist?

A. You should. Early detection and treatment of complications from diabetes, such as foot ulcers, are important for possibly avoiding a foot or leg amputation.

Q. Can podiatrists perform surgery? Do they have other areas of specialty?

A. Podiatrists are medically trained to perform foot and ankle surgery. Within the field of podiatric medicine, podiatrists specialize in surgery, sports medicine, biomechanics, geriatrics, pediatrics, orthopedics or primary care.

Q. What can podiatrists do for sports-related injuries?

A. If you have a foot or ankle injury, seek immediate treatment. Common problems are sprains and fractures. Stretched or torn ligaments, known as sprains, may cause extensive swelling around the ankle. Fractures occur when a bone is cracked or broken. A podiatrist may prescribe rehabilitation to restore strength to the area.



Only 25 percent of Americans who have foot ailments have seen a doctor about their problem—and only about half of those have seen a foot specialist.

Q. What sort of training does a podiatrist have?

A. Podiatrists, podiatric physicians and podiatric surgeons are all doctors of podiatric medicine (DPMs). They're uniquely qualified among medical professionals to medically and surgically treat the foot and ankle. Podiatrists get medical education and training comparable to medical doctors or doctors of osteopathic medicine, including four years of undergraduate education, four years of graduate education at one of nine podiatric medical colleges, and two or three years of hospital-based residency training.

Q. What should I know about toenail infections?

A. A podiatrist can detect a fungal infection early and plan treatments. People with diabetes, peripheral vascular disease or other circulatory disorders in particular should seek podiatric medical care as soon as possible if they have toenail troubles. Avoid “do-it-yourself” treatments, including any attempt to remove any part of an infected nail.

Q. How do I find a podiatrist?

A. Visit www.apma.org/finda-podiatrist.