

Seniors: Keep Free From Foot Pain

(NAPSA)—Senior citizens with foot pain can do something about it. Instead of abiding by the faulty but commonly accepted notion that muscle and joint discomfort is a natural consequence of aging, seniors with foot problems should seek treatment, according to the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS). Why needlessly endure pain that will prevent you from leading an active and healthy lifestyle?

“Unfortunately many seniors believe it’s normal to have pain as you get older, but nothing could be further from the truth,” said Kimberly Eickmeier, DPM, a podiatric surgeon at the Christie Clinic in Champaign, Ill. “As a result, they usually don’t seek treatment for painful conditions, such as bunions, which can be corrected with surgery and a short recovery period.”

A recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that bunion surgery is more than 80 percent successful in relieving pain. In older patients, bunions are very debilitating because these deformities worsen and become more painful over time.

“Given the outstanding success rate of corrective forefoot surgery, there’s no reason for any senior to be debilitated by bunions,” said Eickmeier. “Further, the adverse health implications of being inactive are far more serious than any risk associated with surgery.”

Seniors who are avid walkers frequently have heel pain. For those experiencing this problem, Eickmeier advises taking ibuprofen or aspirin and doing daily stretching exercises. But if heel pain persists more than two weeks, she recommends a consultation with a podiatric foot and ankle surgeon for definitive diagnosis and treatment. “In the large majority of cases, persistent heel pain can be treated successfully with orthotics that provide a cushion and support that help reduce inflammation and stress,” Eickmeier said.

In situations when conservative treatment fails, outpatient surgical procedures are effective. Surgery for heel pain doesn’t require a long recovery period and it permanently relieves the source of pressure on the heel bone.



Three or four weeks of physical therapy generally follow heel surgery. Full recovery takes six to eight weeks.

Since the foot changes as we age, there are several other age-related foot problems that can occur:

- Feet generally lengthen and get narrower with age, so wearing shoes that have become too tight can aggravate bunions and other problems and also cause painful blisters.

- Arthritis, osteoporosis, diabetes and poor circulation can lead to serious foot and ankle problems including adult-acquired flatfoot and joint degeneration. The crippling impact of arthritis in the ankle, however, can be minimized with new arthroscopic surgery techniques.

- Women with osteoporosis are vulnerable to stress fractures and should wear shoes with well-cushioned soles and strong arch supports to minimize pressure and impact on brittle bones in the foot.

- People with diabetes often lose nerve sensation on the bottom of the foot and, therefore, are at high risk for foot ulcers that, left untreated, can become infected and eventually require the foot to be amputated.

- Individuals with cardiovascular disease can experience poor blood circulation that can affect blood flow to the feet.

Seniors interested in further information should contact the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons for free brochures on a wide variety of foot and ankle conditions or to locate a podiatric foot and ankle surgeon in their communities. The toll-free number is 1-888-THE FEET and the College’s Web site address is www.acfas.org.