

What is Podiatry?

Podiatry is health profession that specialises in the assessment, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of complications of the foot and lower limb. A podiatrist can give you advice about foot care, gait analysis and on the best footwear for you and your family. Podiatrists are educated to degree level and are regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

When do I need to see a podiatrist?

You should visit a podiatrist if:

- **Your feet hurt** - they will assess your condition and advise you on the best treatment.
- **Your symptoms are getting worse** - a problem isn't improving naturally, or within three weeks of self-care.
- **You want to prevent foot problem** - a regular foot check can help keep your feet healthy.

How do I get an appointment with a podiatrist?

Podiatrists are essential healthcare providers and are able to work safely throughout all levels of restrictions during the pandemic. Some podiatrists are also able to offer virtual consultations where they deem it appropriate. There are different ways to see a podiatrist, and may depend on where you live:

Via your local NHS

In some areas you may be able to self-refer and in others a GP referral is required. Check with your local NHS for information. Podiatry services are continuing throughout national restrictions, but local services may vary. You can also search at NHS Choices for a podiatrist in England, nhs.uk in Northern Ireland or via your local NHS Trust/ Health Board website in Scotland or Wales. If you have a long-term medical condition such as diabetes or poor circulation and are at risk of complications may be eligible for NHS podiatry services. Your GP can advise you.

Visit your local independent practice podiatrist

It's important to find a professional who is registered with the HCPC, which is the UK-wide regulatory body. Use the tool on our website to find a podiatrist near you:

rcpod.org.uk/find-a-podiatrist

Top tips to help prevent foot problems



Follow our simple steps to help keep your feet in tip-top shape and reduce your risk of developing any problems.

1. Wash your feet every day

Use warm, soapy water and take care to dry your feet well, especially between your toes - this will help to prevent fungal infections, such as athlete's foot.

2. Keep your feet moisturised

If the skin on your feet is dry, put moisturiser on your feet before you go to bed, avoiding between the toes (this can lead to fungal infections).

3. Wear the right footwear

It's important to make sure your shoes are the right size for your feet. Buy footwear in the afternoon when your feet are at their largest. Get your feet measured if you are unsure of your size. While at home for longer periods of time, try to avoid unsupportive footwear such as slippers.

4. Check your feet regularly

Giving your feet the once over every week will help you to spot any possible problems quickly.

5. Pay attention to your socks

Wear well-fitting socks and change them every day to avoid sweaty feet.

6. Trim your toenails

Use proper nail clippers - and cut them straight across, not too short and not down at the corners, as this can lead to ingrowing toenails. If you can't cut your nails, try filing them once or twice a week instead.

7. Rotate your shoes

Try not to wear the same shoes two days in a row, to reduce your chances of developing a fungal infection.

8. Do regular calf stretches

Get into a routine of doing these every day to keep your feet supple.

9. Vary your heel height

Keep high heels for special occasions, as regular use can damage your feet.

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 ROYAL COLLEGE
of PODIATRY



Choosing the right shoes for you

Who we are:

The Royal College of Podiatry is the academic authority for podiatry in the UK, and the professional body for the UK's registered podiatrists. We provide information to the public, media and health organisations as well as professional and trade union support for podiatrists in the UK.

Further foot health information: The Royal College of Podiatry website www.rcpod.org.uk provides a wealth of information on common foot conditions and general foot health advice.

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Foot pain in retail workers

A recent study of foot pain in retail workers uncovered some painful statistics.

- **79%** of those surveyed are on their feet for four to ten hours
- **34%** reaching the eight to ten hours period.
- **30%** of workers felt that their quality of work and mental wellbeing were affected within the first four hours of being on their feet.
- **41%** felt that their mental wellbeing was being affected by eight hours on their feet

If your job requires you to be on your feet for long periods of time, your foot health may start to suffer.

So how can we reduce this number?

By listening to our feet. Foot pain should not be ignored. If you have pain that has lasted for longer than two weeks, or is recurring, then professional intervention is advised.

As experts of the foot and lower limb, podiatrists are best placed to assess your issues, diagnose the cause, and help you regain your foot health and reduce your pain.

One of the preventative steps that can be taken is to wear footwear that is appropriate for your work or activity. This can reduce discomfort and the chance of injury.



Top tips to help prevent foot pain problems

Follow our simple steps to help keep your feet in tip-top shape and reduce your risk of developing any work related foot pain problems.

1. Does your shoe fit?

Shoes should have the right length, width and depth to accommodate your foot shape.



2. Does your footwear meet the health and safety requirements for your job?

You may need to wear an anti-slip sole, full shoe or wear safety footwear to comply with health and safety requirements for your role.



3. Is the shoe supportive?

Does it provide suitable support at the heel and arch or allow you to fit your orthotics in? A lack of support can cause foot strains and pain.



4. Does the shoe stay on?

Laces or fastenings are the best way to keep a shoe on your foot. Ill-fitting slip on shoes, or backless shoes, will increase your risk of slips and falls.



Source data: Materialise, 2021

Make sure the shoe fits

Your footwear should reflect the shape and size of your foot.

Length, width and depth all need taken into consideration.



The shoe should have around a 1 - 1.5cm gap between the end of your longest toe and the end of the shoe to allow for wiggle room. Roughly the width of your thumb.



The shoe should be wide enough fit the broadest part of your foot. Don't forget your foot shape changes when you stand.



The toe box also needs to be deep enough to accommodate the depth of your toes. The average shoe is only 2cm deep.

Your feet are as individual as you, ask your podiatrist for advice on the types of footwear that are best suited to your feet's needs.

Ideal features in your shoe

Make sure the mid sole isn't flexible. This is the section of the shoe under your arch.



If the sole is too flexible here then your foot will have to work harder. However a bit of flexibility is good in the front section or for the sole to rise up to make a rocker motion for your big toe.

Have a way of adjusting them to your foot across the top of your arch. This could be laces, a strap or a Velcro fastening. This will help your shoes stay on and give you a better fit.

Check the sole

Make sure the sole has enough shock absorption to protect your foot, especially if you are going to be doing a lot of walking or standing in the shoes.

Is the footbed removable?

If the insole can come out of the shoe this allows your own insole, orthotic or custom footbed to be inserted and to help tailor the shoe to your foot's individual needs.

The right shoe for the right job

Think about what activities you will be doing when choosing your footwear. Some jobs will have specific safety requirements for footwear to comply with health and safety requirements.

Is there a risk of a crush injury?

Wear safety footwear with protective toecaps.

Are you at a risk of slipping?

Wear slip resistant soles.

Is there a danger from nails or sharp objects?

Wear puncture resistant soles.

Will you be climbing ladders?

Ensure your footwear is unlikely to slip off easily.

Will you be standing for long periods of time?

Avoid heels over 2cm in height and look for footwear with good shock absorption.