

Munster Treatment Rooms

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Feet First – the importance of good foot care!

We all tend to take our feet for granted and generally neglect them, yet they are very important for our overall well-being.

Since our feet carry and support our entire weight and propel us in the right (or wrong!) directions, it is only logical to take care of them, but we don't always do this and this can lead to many problems down the road.

The foot is a very complex piece of anatomy consisting of 27 bones held together by tendons, ligaments and muscle. Because the foot has joints that are flexible, they succumb to a lot of pressure and abuse and this can lead to much discomfort in later life.

It's like thinking of pensions – it doesn't matter much when you are 20 or 25 but when you're older you realise the value of investing now for future returns.

I can't overemphasise the importance of wearing proper and supportive footwear at all times. A lot of modern footwear, while fashionable and pretty, can be very harmful to the long-term health of the foot and the body in general. I see the consequences of this in my clinic on a very frequent basis and it pains me to see that many of the problems which people have are related to the kind of footwear that they chose.

Women succumb to this more than men with footwear that ranges from the simple flip flop to "crocs" to pumps to slip-ons to stilettos. Regardless of the *fashionability* of these *accoutrements*, most, if not all, offer little or no support and indeed can throw the body off balance and cause skeletal, tendon and muscular problems which can become quite significant and painful. This is especially so for growing bones.

While certain shoe types are perhaps suitable for different terrains – flip flops for beaches – they cannot be recommended for everyday use at all. Common complaints include fallen arches, bunions, heel spurs, lower back pain and flat footedness.

Remember we usually spend up to ½ our day on our feet. You need foot support whether you're at school, college, in work or going about your everyday business. So I urge people to be careful about their choice of shoes, and while this has to be balanced with fashion sense, think about the long term impact.

For athletes, too, it is important for you to take care of your feet especially if you are walking/running a lot of miles on a weekly basis. Change your runners regularly.

When you're buying shoes, talk to a Sales Assistant who is trained to fit you properly and listen to their advice. Common solutions include inserts and orthotics. These

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too need to be carefully considered. Remember, both the arch and the instep need support.

Orthotics can change the position of the foot and that can create aches and pains in the lower limbs and hips and even in to the lower back, and, if you are in any doubt or need help about your orthotics, you can always ask your local Physical Therapist who can help you to adjust to your new posture after fitting new orthotics.

So remember folks look after your feet and when you reach the Pearly Gates, whatever about the rest of you at least your feet will be in good shape.

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