

Institute for Preventive Foot Health

BY GREG PETTY

I have been playing tennis for over thirty years and it has taken a toll on my feet and knees. Many years have been spent pounding hard courts and making lateral-direction changes. After a torn ACL, I really started paying attention to how I would protect my feet, knees and back. One of the answers was to place as much padding between my foot and the tennis shoe—and to buy the correct sport shoe for my foot type. These concerns led me to begin using Thorlo socks many years ago. I have two pairs of them in my drawer today. After the tennis shoe, the Thorlo padded socks are my second line of defense against impact stress.

Thorlo, based in Statesville, is a North Carolina success story. It was founded by Jim Throneburg's father as a specialty textile firm. The firm prospered patenting and producing the roll top sock with clients that included a stellar brand such as Izod. Around 1979 Jim Throneburg, the sock inventor and patent holder, began to experiment with designs, fabrics and techniques to provide a sock with support only in the locations the foot needed. The product is marketed worldwide and is a leader in its market segment.

Mr. Throneburg, now 75 years young, does not rest on his laurels but is actively involved in philanthropic efforts through founding and endowing the Institute for Preventive Foot Health (IPFH). IPFH's mission is to promote awareness, education and research in the field of preventive



foot health. I was aware of my foot health simply due to playing tennis. I think many people just take their feet for granted and do not pay attention to them until a problem arises. However, our feet are the foundation of an active lifestyle, and ultimately, our ability to remain healthy.

IPFH is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping individuals care for their feet through education and research. IPFH has partnered with the Amputee Coalition and the International Council on Active Aging to fund public awareness through the media. The research center disseminates information to people affected by diabetes, arthritis, heart disease and ailments that limit a person's mobility. IPFH conducted a survey and the results indicated that 88 percent of adults have experi-

enced foot pain or problems in their lifetime. By the age of 50 we have walked or run 75,000 miles and have broken down the skin and protective fat pads on the balls, heels and toes of our feet. IPFH also publishes tips for foot health and distributes it nationally. A third generation Throneburg, Jim's son J. Lynn, is the president of the institute and Robert Thompson; CPed (Pedorthist) is the executive director.

Don't take your feet for granted. Take care of them for your continued good health. A good way to start is to visit the IPFH.org site for valuable information including a glossary of foot terms, conditions and tips for maintaining healthy feet.



Shoes are Not an Accessory!

BY CHERYL O'GRADY

Your shoes are the most important item in your wardrobe. Why? Because your feet carry your entire skeleton. Your feet are the foundation of your body, much like the foundation of your house. If you don't have a solid foundation and take care of it, cracks will develop elsewhere in the structure. When you don't have good support at the feet, you develop issues like knee and back pain, fatigue, headaches, and more

Your feet are incredible pieces of bio-mechanical wizardry. They are made to walk on soft, uneven surfaces where the surface rises up to support the arch, much like walking on a beach. Sadly, few of us spend much time walking on the beach or similar surfaces these days. So we need to make sure we provide the support the environment no longer does. That means wearing shoes with good arch support. Many issues with the feet can be traced to inadequate support that causes the weight to be distributed just in one or two places on the foot, usually the ball of the foot or the heel. When that happens, those places develop pain or cause you to walk differently, throwing other parts of the body out of alignment. A flattened arch pulls the ankle over, and because the ankle bone is connected to the shin bone and the shin bone is connected to the knee bone, now your knee is out of alignment. This continues all the way to the top of the spine.

Every time you look for the cutest pair of shoes, or the cheapest pair of shoes, and don't pay attention to how supportive they are, you are taking away from the health of your feet. Think about it, if your feet hurt, don't you hurt all over? Fortunately for us today, the people who make supportive shoes have finally gotten the message that we want shoes that look good. More and more, great-looking shoes also have great arch support.

Next time you are shopping, start with the most important piece, your shoes. Build your outfits from there. Your feet—and your body—will be happier you did.

Cheryl O'Grady is a certified pedorthist and owner of Foot Solutions of Raleigh. You can reach her at 919.544.6300 or visit footsolutions.com/raleigh for more information.



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