

Holiday Season

Preventive Foot Healthcare Tips

by Robert P. (Bob) Thompson, CPed

Shopping trips, parties and family gatherings can take their toll on your feet during the holiday season, but you can avoid the stress if you practice these simple tips from the Institute for Preventive Foot Health (IPFH) throughout the year.



10 Top Tips During the Season

1. **Check your feet every day** – twice daily if you have diabetes: once in the morning and again before bedtime. If you can't see the bottom of your feet, use a mirror on an extended handle or have someone else perform the examination for you. Look for cuts, scrapes or redness and feel for lumps and bumps that shouldn't be there. A numb diabetic foot is especially susceptible to unrecognized, repetitive trauma that could result in the formation of lesions/ulcers. Consult your doctor or foot health specialist if *any* lesions are found.
2. **Wear socks with padding under the toes**, the balls of the feet and the heels, made of acrylic-blend fibers. They'll absorb and wick moisture away from your feet. Avoid socks made of 100 percent natural fibers like cotton, wool and silk, as they absorb and retain moisture.
3. **Use an integrated approach to selecting comfortable, properly fitted and supportive shoes.** Know the proper shoe length and width you should be wearing. Don't rely on the size you've "always worn." The toe box should be tall and follow the shape of your feet (oblique or square-toe shoes are probably best) and footwear with both an arch support and a strong heel counter is recommended. You should be able to wiggle your toes in your shoes, which should be one-third to one-half inch longer than the longest toe on your longest foot when you're standing. Select shoes with softer



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soles, such as thermoplastic rubber or ethylene vinyl acetate instead of leather; for better winter protection, select shoes with solid uppers instead of mesh fabrics.

4. **Use an arch support** (over-the-counter or custom-designed if needed) particularly if you have high arches or flat feet or require some biomechanical correction. Even a simple gel insert can help when you're out power shopping!
5. **Wash your feet in warm – not hot – soapy water daily.** If you have no feeling in your feet, use your elbow to test the temperature first. (Soaking your feet in Epsom salt may bring temporary relief if they're tired and achy). Dry them thoroughly before donning socks. Seek professional assistance if your toenails are discolored or separating from the skin. Such discoloration may be a sign of fungal infection or injury.
6. **Apply moisturizing lotion to your feet after bathing to alleviate dry skin.** If you have diabetes, *do not* apply lotion between your toes, as the resulting moist environment could favor fungal development and the friction created where the bony prominences of the joints meet between your toes could cause lesions/ulcers.
7. **Trim your toe nails.** Cut them straight across. If your toenails are thick or you can't reach them easily, *do not* attempt to trim them yourself. Seek professional assistance.
8. **Limit the time you go barefoot around the house.** Avoid temperature extremes (especially in winter!). If you have diabetes, *never* go barefooted! At a minimum, wear houseshoes.
9. **If possible, don't wear the same pair of shoes two days in a row.** The moisture that builds up inside your shoes needs time to evaporate, and the shoes need to dry out if they get wet on the outside.
10. **Avoid crossing your legs – doing so may inhibit your circulation.** The breakdown of nerve function combined with restricted blood flow is virtually a guaranteed prescription for amputation. 🌱



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