

# footprints

An informational newsletter for patients of APMA member podiatrists

Winter 2009

## Even Santa has a Great Pair of Boots

Boots have long been a practical choice for the winter, but today's boots are also a fashion statement. Even those who don't need to worry about cold weather are opting for boots this season. If you follow some specific "podiatrist-approved" advice, you will be comfortable wearing your boots regardless of where you live and what type of temperatures you have to endure.

- Have your feet measured before trying on boots. The size of your feet can change throughout your life. Keep

in mind that your boot size may not be the same in all styles and brands of boots. Try to fit boots in the afternoon, when your feet are at their largest. And buy your boots for your larger foot—did you know that most feet are not the exact same size?

- Boots should feel comfortable when you try them on in the store. Don't think you can "break them in" because more than likely if they aren't comfortable in the store, they won't be comfortable in three more weeks. Boots constructed of

natural materials, like leather, will keep your feet dry and comfortable during the winter months. Stay away from synthetics and plastics which will cause your feet to sweat, trapping in heat and moisture and causing odor.

- Bring your prescribed insoles or orthotics when boot shopping. The rigid shape of some boots limits natural foot movement and provides no arch support. A good insole inside the boot will cushion your foot and provide that much needed support.
- While you are in the store, think about how you will be using your boot. If you opt for furry snow boots, you will want to look for rubber soles with deep grooves to give you the best traction. Obviously, those narrow high heels and spikes look fashionable, but they won't be a good choice on snowy days. Choose a lower heel or stacked heel for additional support.
- When choosing boots for specific sports such as skiing or snowboarding, you should always work with a knowledgeable sales-person. With good advice, along with your orthotics or insoles, you can not only be comfortable, but you can also improve your performance on the ice and snow.

When in doubt about any type of boot, ask your podiatrist for recommendations. Often the doctor can help you make the best choice for your foot type and even for a specific sport. Even Santa has a great podiatrist, you know. •



## Man Up and Think about your Feet

Men and women have some similarities in their foot problems, but they also have a number of differences. Since we all have less time to think about our feet during the holiday season, we thought we'd get the men out there thinking about what some of the differences might be.

Let's admit it guys, we usually tend to wait too long to seek medical care. We avoid our medical problems until sometimes they become too serious to ignore. The term "weekend warriors" often applies to us, especially when we start on a new exercise routine. We also tend to binge on exercise during the weekend. And while we're making a list, we are less likely to use the proper type of shoe for activities, and we tend not to prepare for those same activities with stretching before and after exercise.

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## Men's foot health continued . . .

When you experience an athletic injury, it's important to do the right thing fast. Call your podiatrist to discuss any and all foot and ankle injuries. The doctor may recommend that you treat your injury at home, or may recommend that you meet him or her at the office or the ER. While you're waiting, remember "RICE" — rest, ice, compression, and elevation.

Another problem that men may be more prone to is "athlete's foot," which has a great title for a crummy infection. While most men over fifty would love to have "athlete" associated with them in any way, this condition is probably not what you had in mind. Athlete's foot is a skin disease caused by a fungus, usually occurring between the toes. The signs of athlete's foot are dry skin, itching, scaling, inflammation, and blisters.

Men can do a lot to prevent infection by practicing good foot hygiene. Daily washing of the feet with soap and water; drying carefully, especially between the toes; and changing shoes regularly to decrease moisture, help to prevent the fungus from infecting the feet. Men should also avoid walking barefoot,

wear socks that keep feet dry and change them frequently, and reduce perspiration by using a powder recommended by the podiatrist.

If an apparent fungus condition does not respond to proper foot hygiene and self care, and there is no improvement within two weeks, consult your podiatrist. The doctor will determine if a fungus is the cause of the problem. If it is, a specific treatment plan, including the prescription of antifungal medication, applied topically or taken by mouth, will usually be suggested. •



## Is Surgery in Your Future? How to Prepare



If you are facing the possibility of foot or ankle surgery anytime soon, or even if you are considering a procedure in your podiatrist's office, there are some helpful tips that you should heed before and after.

When you are considering any surgical procedure, including foot and ankle surgery, you will need specific tests or examinations before surgery to encourage a successful surgical outcome. Prior to surgery, the podiatric surgeon will review your medical history and medical conditions. Specific diseases, illnesses, allergies, and current medications need to be evaluated. Other tests that help evaluate your health status may be ordered including blood studies, urinalysis, EKG, X-rays, a blood flow study (to better evaluate the circulatory status of the foot/legs), and a biomechanical examination.

A consultation with another medical specialist may be advised or required by your insurance or surgical facility, depending on your test results or a specific medical condition.

The type of foot surgery performed will determine the length and kind of aftercare required to assure that your recovery from surgery is rapid and uneventful. The basics of all postoperative care involve to some degree each of the following: rest, ice, compression, and elevation. Bandages, splints, surgical shoes, casts, crutches, or canes may be necessary to ensure a safe recovery after foot surgery. A satisfactory recovery can be hastened by carefully following your post-operative instructions.

Surgery of the rearfoot and/or ankle requires especially close care following surgery. To assure a rapid and easy recovery, it is important to follow your podiatric surgeon's advice and post-operative instructions carefully. All of the same procedures apply for rearfoot surgery, but you may have issues that are more complicated. For example, your podiatric surgeon will determine if and when you can bear weight on the foot that had the surgery.

By following the advice of your podiatric surgeon, you can ensure that your recovery after foot surgery, regardless of the type, will be uneventful. Take the time you've been given to recover appropriately and remember that a good book can help you through your recovery. •

Doctors of podiatric medicine are podiatric physicians and surgeons, also known as podiatrists, qualified by their education, training, and experience to diagnose and treat conditions affecting the foot, ankle, and related structures of the leg.