

NAILS

NEWS, TIPS, TIDBITS

foot files

a vocabulary lesson for pedicurists

Pronation is not some kind of extreme patriotism. Pronation is the natural inward rolling that a foot does in movement, from the back outside of the heel to the inside front of the ball of the foot. It's a natural action that helps the foot flatten and absorb the shock of the body's weight. If someone is an overpronator, meaning they roll too much, and they do not wear running shoes to compensate for this, they can suffer joint injuries, muscle strain, and back pain. Conversely, supinators (or underpronators) do not get adequate shock absorption and their body is jarred unnecessarily. Both conditions (which are not abnormal) can be accommodated for with proper running footwear. To determine the level of pronation someone has, wet the feet and have her stand on a piece of cardboard. A full footprint with very little dry area indicates a low arch or overpronation. A supinator with a high arch will leave only the outline of the footprint wet, and practically nothing in the arch area.



take 10 for your feet

Women who complain of ugly feet should point the blame at their shoes rather than genetics, says Johanna Youner, D.P.M., a podiatrist in New York City. High heels, narrow toe boxes, and improper sizing all contribute to a variety of common foot complaints such as corns, bunions, and hammertoes.



"If a shoe looks nothing like your foot, over time it will deform your foot," Dr. Youner comments. "Women who want to prevent developing ugly feet need to avoid any pressure on the top or sides of the feet. Shoe models wear army boots and several layers of socks and Vaseline [to keep their feet looking good]."

The average woman doesn't necessarily need to go to those extremes to protect her feet, though, says Dr. Youner. Different foot types require different types of shoes, and she urges women to seek out a good shoe professional for proper fitting. She also offers these one-size-fits-all tips to keep feet healthy:

- Shop for shoes later in the day, when the feet are most swollen.
- Make buying decisions based on fit and comfort rather than on fashion "You can't judge how a shoe looks on your foot from your vantage point," Dr. Youner observes. (By the same token, she reminds those suffering from "Big Foot" complex that dark-colored shoes make the foot appear smaller.)
- Spend some time walking around the store in the shoe: if it's not entirely comfortable, don't buy it
- Make sure the shoe has a generously sized toe box. Narrow toe boxes traumatize the nails, skin, and bones
- Heavy calluses on heels are caused by too-large shoes. Don't try to compensate for a narrow toe box with a larger size or width.
- You can wear heels on occasion if the shoe has an adequately sized toe box.
- Shoes should be stable and supportive and have an arch. High-heeled shoes should be rigid, bending only at the toe box. "A shoe should never twist," Dr. Youner says.
- Heavy calluses and cracked skin can be winter- or age-related. Use a heavy moisturizer — a cream, rather than a lotion — that contains salicylic or lactic acids. "Feet are drier in winter," she says. "You have to take off the top layer of dead skin [with the acids] and moisturize to prevent cracking"
- Don't get too aggressive when cleaning under the toenails. "Fungal spores are always present around the feet," she notes. "If you have gray, gunky stuff under the nails, remove it gently."
- Her last bit of advice? "Fit your foot — not a societal standard."

For the inevitable occasional "bad foot day," Dr. Youner recommends a little pampering relief. "Soak your feet in comfortably warm water with Epsom salts for 20 minutes to reduce the inflammation," she says. "Then massage them with peppermint oil [in a carrier oil] to break up the internal waste. Afterward, wrap them in Ace bandages or wrap [athlete's] tape around the forefoot and metatarsals to support and rest them."

JOHANNA YOUNER, D.P.M.