

# footprints

An informational newsletter for patients of APMA member podiatrists

Summer 2007

## Athletes and Injuries

NBA All-Stars, Olympic competitors, and World Cup soccer stars all have a lot in common other than their status as professional athletes. Many have sought the advice of a podiatric physician and found significant relief for foot and ankle problems. All athletes work hard to achieve their goals, and most are extremely dedicated to their sport. Their bodies are finely tuned, and they know almost immediately when something just isn't right. But athletes, whether they are professionals or weekend warriors, can all work with a podiatric physician to improve their game.

Many athletes, regardless of their level of competition, are prone to injury. These injuries can include ankle and foot sprains, and irritation of tendons such as the Achilles tendon or ligaments such as the plantar fascia. These are in addition to stress fractures or irritation of previous deformities or conditions.

The majority of new injuries can be linked to errors in training. It is important to design training regimens carefully around a progressive increase in intensity and frequency. In a word, allow the body to adapt to the new demands being placed upon it. Once

training errors have been addressed, the podiatric physician and surgeon can be invaluable in managing faults in the form and function of the foot and ankle. In addition, since podiatric physicians are familiar with gait cycles and their relationships to different sports, they can often evaluate issues that can be corrected in order to significantly improve times or overall performance.



Treating patients aggressively so that they are able to resume their sport as quickly as possible with minimal risk for re-injury is the highest priority for athletes and for podiatric physicians who treat these athletes. With an unsurpassed knowledge of the foot and ankle, the podiatric physician and surgeon is uniquely adept at treating these and other sports-related problems. •

## Vacation Prescription for Summer Foot Safety



The American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) and your APMA member podiatric physician recommend the following tips to ensure that your summer starts and ends in a foot-loose fashion:

Limit walking barefoot as it exposes feet to sunburn, as well as plantar warts, athlete's foot, and other foreign bodies and infections and also increases risk of injury to your feet. Wear shoes or flip-flops around the pool, to

the beach, in the locker room, and even on the carpeting or in the bathroom of your hotel room to prevent injuries and limit the likelihood of contracting any infections.

Remember to apply sunscreen all over your feet, especially the tops and fronts of ankles, and don't forget to reapply after you've been in the water. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water throughout the day. This will not only help with overall health, but will also minimize any foot swelling caused by the heat. Keep blood flowing with periodic ankle flexes, toe wiggles, and calf stretches.

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Your podiatrist is your best sports medicine resource. To help your doctor get you back "on your feet," be ready to answer the following questions:

1. How long has the injury/pain existed?
2. When does your foot or ankle hurt?
3. Have you had any recent changes to your activities, workouts, or shoes?
4. What have you done to treat your injury/pain?
5. Have you had this type of problem in the past?

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## Foot Safety (continued from page 1)

Some activities at the beach, lake, or river may require different types of footwear, so be sure to ask the contact at each activity if specific shoes are needed. To be safe, always pack an extra pair of sneakers or a pair of protective water shoes. If your shoes will be getting wet, you should dry them out completely before wearing them again to prevent bacteria or fungus from growing.

If you injure your foot or ankle while on vacation, seek professional medical attention from a podiatric physician. Many people often contact a doctor only when something is broken or sprained, but a podiatrist can begin treating your ailment immediately while you're away from home. •

## Get Strappy with Sandal Tips



Summertime is here, and so are the sunny days splashing in pools, catching rays out on the water, and relaxing on the beach. As many outdoor enthusiasts know, summer can cause some extra wear and tear on the body. Educated consumers usually protect themselves by purchasing sunscreen, lip balms, and sunglasses. But many of us forget to

look after two of the most important and neglected parts of the body—the feet.

When choosing sandals, here are some tips to keep you and your toes in good shape:

- Look for sandals with lower, wider heels and a stable sole to offer greater support and balance and to reduce pressure on the ball of the foot and toes. Anything over a two-inch heel changes the way the foot functions and puts you at higher risk for problems.

- Check the soles of the shoes. Ultra-thin soles provide inadequate cushioning and foot support, which is needed especially on the hottest days.

- Flip-flops can often cause blisters when the material rubs the skin between the toes. Choose flip-flops made of natural materials and soft, supple leather. Ensure that the sandal fits properly and that the foot doesn't hang off the edge.

- Try on sandals and walk around before buying. Make sure they feel comfortable in the store. Later, make sure that you break in new shoes before going on trips where you may do a lot of walking. •

## The “Ouch” Factor: What To Do About Splinters

The warm, sunny weather of summer is an invitation for us to shed our shoes and socks and run barefoot. But doing so can be risky since running or walking (both inside and outside) can lead to problems for your feet. Needles, broken glass, small tacks, hairs, or splinters of wood can be hidden in the carpets of your home, and those are only the problems inside your house. Outside, the obstacles can be even more varied and dangerous.

While small splinters can be removed at home, any large or deep splinters in the foot should be removed by your podiatric physician. Anyone with diabetes should be especially vigilant, since a small splinter can grow quickly into a serious infection.

To remove small splinters, clean a tweezers with an alcohol wipe and wash your hands and the affected area thoroughly. Grasp the visible end of the splinter with the tweezers and pull gently. Most splinters will come out easily. If you have any trouble removing the splinter, contact your podiatric physician immediately. You can soak your foot prior to your appointment to soften the skin, but do not attempt to open the skin. Wipe the area with antiseptic and cover with a Bandaid®, then head to a podiatric physician's office.

Also, contact your doctor immediately if the area becomes red, swollen, or hot to the touch, either after you remove a splinter or if you cannot see any foreign body under the skin. These are all signs that you may have missed part of the splinter or have an infection, and your podiatric physician will need to do further treatment of the area. Whatever is imbedded in your foot will determine how the podiatrist will treat you, but deeply imbedded foreign bodies may even require a surgical procedure.

One good way to avoid splinters is to wear shoes both in the house and outside. There are many great options for summer besides bare feet, so keep feet healthy and happy by making good choices and avoiding splinters. •

### For minor foot problems, be prepared with the following on-the-go gear:

- **Flip-Flops** — for the pool, spa, hotel room, and airport security check points
- **Sterile Bandages** — for covering minor cuts and scrapes on the foot
- **Antibiotic Cream** — to treat any skin injury
- **Emollient-enriched Cream** — to hydrate feet
- **Blister Pads or Moleskin** — to protect against blisters
- **Motrin® or Advil® (anti-inflammatory)** — to ease tired, swollen feet
- **Toenail Clippers** — to keep toenails trim
- **Emery Board** — to smooth rough edges or broken nails
- **Pumice Stone** — to soften callused skin
- **Sunscreen** — to protect against the scorching sun
- **Aloe Vera or Silvadene Cream** — to relieve sunburns

