

# FOOTNOTES 2008

NEWS YOU CAN USE FOR WINTER 2008

## Keep Your Toes Toasty

Whether you're heading off to a snowy region this season or stepping into the elements just outside your door, make sure you're dressed appropriately for the weather. It's important to wear layers of warm clothes, but don't forget your feet. Keeping your feet warm helps prevent cold weather conditions, such as frostbite.

Frostbite is a condition that can occur when skin is exposed to extreme cold, resulting in tissue damage and possible tissue loss. Your fingers, toes, and areas of commonly exposed skin like the nose and cheeks are at risk for frostbite. In the foot, frostbite typically develops in stages beginning with

cold toes that then turn bright red in color. The color in the toes continues to change and darken into purples and blues and eventually black, indicating severe frostbite. If you have diabetic neuropathy, which causes loss of feeling in the foot, it is especially important you check your toes regularly for signs of frostbite.

Another symptom of frostbite is numbness in the toes; however, numb toes can also be a symptom of other conditions, such as tarsal tunnel syndrome, metatarsalgia, and neuromas. Wearing tight shoes can also cause numbness in the toes.



If you are experiencing numbness in your toes, call our office to schedule an appointment. If you suspect the numbness is due to frostbite, seek medical attention immediately. 🌱

## The Switch from Sandals to Shoes

Say good-bye to the sandals, loose slip-ons and bare feet of the summer. Now that winter is here, many of us have switched to socks and closed toe shoes. This change in your feet's environment can cause foot problems, including:

**Ingrown toenails.** Wearing an enclosed shoe can be a factor in getting an ingrown toenail. Watch how you trim your toenails and also wear shoes that are not tight in the toe box.

**Toenail fungus.** Fungus commonly attacks the feet because it thrives in a dark, moist, warm environment such as a shoe. Many of us wear the same shoes every day without realizing this can promote fungal growth. To help avoid this problem, occasionally disinfect your shoes and wear different pairs to allow them to air out. Also, remove any left over summer nail polish from your toes. Nail polish seals the nail and traps moisture, creating a breeding ground for fungus.

**Light sensitive skin disorders.** Wearing socks and shoes the majority of the time in the winter months, resulting in no sun or UV light exposure to the feet, may increase flare-ups of light sensitive skin disorders, such as psoriasis.

**Irritation to bony prominences.** Bony prominences on the foot due to conditions such as hammertoes, bunions and bone spurs can be irritated by constant rubbing on shoes. Wear socks and properly fitting shoes. Having your shoe stretched in the areas of irritation may also provide some relief.

**Neuroma flare-ups.** Neuromas, or nerve pain, may be triggered by tight fitting enclosed shoes. Make sure there is a wide toe box in your shoe so your toes are not being squeezed or irritated.

Call our office to schedule an appointment if your feet are experiencing problems from the switch to winter shoes. 🌱



# Protect Your Feet from Indoor Sports Injuries

In the winter months, many of us move our exercise routine indoors. From running on the health club track, participating in court sports such as basketball or tennis, or skating on indoor ice rinks, indoor sports can cause many types of foot or ankle injuries. These may include:

**Stress Fractures.** These tiny, hairline breaks can occur in the bones of the foot. They can be caused by overtraining or overuse, improper training habits or surfaces, improper shoes, flatfoot or other foot deformities, and even osteoporosis. Stress fractures in the bones of the feet can lead to a complete break if left untreated. Persistent pain in the foot is a warning sign that something is wrong.

**Heel pain.** Pain may be due to plantar fasciitis, an inflammation of the band of tissue that extends from the heel bone to the base of the toes. However,

pain in this area may be due to other conditions, including stress fractures, tendon problems or even irritation to heel spurs from snug-fitting shoes and skates.

**Ankle sprains.** These can range from a basic ankle sprain to tendon injuries and talar dome injuries. Remember to lace up those skates to provide more support and stability to the ankle.

**Achilles tendon injuries.** The Achilles tendon runs down the back of the lower leg and connects the calf muscle to the heel bone. Feeling pain and tenderness in the back of your heel or foot may be Achilles tendonitis, an inflammation of the Achilles tendon. This usually develops from a sudden increase of physical activity, such as playing sports only on the weekends. Forceful jumping or pivoting, or sudden accelerations of running, can overstretch the tendon and cause a tear.



**Traumatic fractures.** Due to the speed one can reach ice skating, traumatic fractures can occur. For example, an ice hockey player sliding into the ice rink boards feet first may result in a calcaneal (heel bone) fracture.

Remember to always warm up before activity and stretch afterwards to help prevent an injury. Custom orthotic devices and proper arch support for shoes and skates can help protect your feet. Use the appropriate shoe for your sport and foot type. If you do experience pain, make an appointment with our office for an evaluation. Don't let a foot or ankle injury keep you on the sidelines this winter! 🧢



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