

FOOTNOTES 2006

NEWS YOU CAN USE FOR SUMMER 2006

The Bare Foot Facts

It's summer! Time to kick off your shoes, walk in the grass, or stroll across sandy beaches! But there are a few things to keep in mind before you go barefoot.

Two of the most common injuries caused by going barefoot are cuts and puncture wounds. Grass, sand, and other surfaces can camouflage sharp objects such as broken glass, nails, and sea shells. Protect your feet by wearing shoes! However, if you do get a cut or puncture wound from going barefoot, remember this: Medical treatment within the first 24 hours is important in order to avoid serious infection or other complications. Make an appointment with our office for a thorough cleaning and careful follow-up.

You wouldn't grab a pot of boiling water with your bare hands, right? The summer sun can heat surfaces like sidewalks, asphalt, and sand to triple-digit temperatures, and potentially cause third-degree burns on the soles of your bare feet. Try not to walk barefoot on these surfaces to keep your feet safe!

Do you stop at the ankles when applying sunscreen? Keep going! Feet can get sunburn too. Apply sunscreen to the tops and bottoms of your feet!

Sports like sand volleyball cry out for bare feet. Who wants sand in their shoes? However, walking, jogging and playing sports in bare feet on soft, uneven surfaces like sand frequently leads to arch pain, heel pain, ankle sprains and other injuries. Athletic shoes provide heel cushioning and arch support. If you do hurt your feet or ankles, you can reduce pain and swelling by resting, applying ice and pressure to the injured area, and elevating the foot. If pain and swelling persist after a few days, contact our office for a thorough evaluation.

Plantar warts, caused by a virus, and fungal infections such as Athlete's Foot can be painful and annoying. Although it's difficult to protect your feet from being in contact with the virus and fungus when at the pool or in a locker room, proper hygiene will help to prevent them from causing problems. Thoroughly wash feet with antimicrobial soap after a day at the pool, and then dry them completely,



especially in between the toes.

Finally, if you – or friends or family members – have diabetes, know that going bare foot is a bad idea! The disease causes poor blood circulation and numbness in the feet. A diabetic may not feel pain from a cut, puncture wound or burn. Any type of skin break on a diabetic foot has the potential to get infected and ulcerate if it isn't noticed right away. Diabetics should always wear shoes, and remove them regularly to check for foreign objects like pebbles and sand that can cause sores, ulcers and infections. 🌿

Beach Safety Tips

- Just because a jellyfish is washed up on the shore doesn't mean its tentacles can't sting you. Try not to step on them! Most jellyfish stings heal within days, but if they don't, call our office.
- Bacteria in oceans and lakes can cause infections.
- Flip-flops are inexpensive and acceptable for short walks, like from the car to the water, but they're no replacement for shoes. Flip-flops lack heel cushioning and arch support and can cause plantar

fasciitis, or heel pain. 🌿



Post-disaster Cleanup is Hard on Feet

Summer brings severe weather and natural disasters to many parts of the country, with hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and wildfires turning lives and communities upside down.

When the storm is gone, one of the first things residents want to do is clear away the debris and get back to their normal lives. But in their haste, many people suffer serious foot injuries that could have been avoided.

After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, many foot and ankle surgeons along the Gulf Coast reported treating patients who injured themselves wearing flip-flops and sandals during debris clean-up. Some patients developed bone infections from improperly treated puncture wounds caused by nails and other sharp objects.

Puncture wounds require medical treatment within 24 hours to avoid infection and other complications from embedded foreign objects. Pieces of skin, sock and the shoe itself can be forced into the wound during a puncture, as well as dirt and debris from the object itself. If medical care is inaccessible, every disaster survival kit should include first aid supplies.



If you do get a cut, wash it with clean water and apply a topical antibiotic and a clean bandage. Follow up with a visit to our office for a thorough cleaning and monitoring the wound for infection, and antibiotics or a tetanus shot if necessary.

Other storm clean-up foot safety tips include:

- Watch where you walk. Debris and murky floodwaters can conceal sharp objects. Be careful standing on unstable surfaces and piles of debris that can throw you off balance, causing ankle sprains or fractures.
- Wear appropriate shoe gear, work boots if possible. Don't go barefoot. Avoid open-toed footwear like sandals.
- Take precautions when cutting down tree limbs. A heavy tree limb landing on a foot can cause serious trauma.

By taking some simple precautions to protect your feet from injury, you can make the clean up go more quickly and more safely. 🍀

