

The British Chiropody and Podiatry Association

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FOOTCARE FOR THE ELDERLY

As an elderly patient, it is important that you pay special attention to your feet with regard to foot hygiene, the cutting of nails, the type of sock and stockings/hosiery worn, type of shoe and other matters concerning the feet.

NAILS

Your nails should be attended to on a regular basis using a pair of ordinary nail clippers. The nails of the elderly are usually quite thick in many cases and therefore it would be best to do nail cutting after bath time as the nail would be much easier to cut at this time. Nails should be cut making sure that you follow the length and shape of the toe so as to minimize damage to the nail during the regrowth stage. NEVER probe the nail groove or any part of the nail. Should you be experiencing any difficulty with your nails or should you suffer any pain or discomfort, consult your chiropodist for help and advice.

CORNS AND CALLUSES

It is important for the elderly patient to know that any corn or callus should be treated by a qualified Chiropodist and that removal of these disorders should not be attempted by the patient. Equally NEVER use any corn cures as the medicaments in the preparations could have a serious effect on the patient.

HYGIENE

Your feet should be washed daily in tepid water using mild toilet soap. After washing, the feet should be carefully rinsed in plain water and properly dried, paying special attention to between the toes.

If you have sweaty feet normally, then cleaning the feet with surgical spirit after drying and subsequently dusting the feet will minimize the sweating; equally if you suffer from dry feet, then use of a cream will help to maintain the feet.

It is important that you change to a clean pair of socks / stockings / hosiery every day.

HEAT AND COLD

Due to age the elderly in many cases have problems with circulation and because of this the elderly patient should avoid very hot baths. Electric blankets should be turned off at bedtime and you should not sit too close to fireplaces or heaters. NEVER use hot poultices and ONLY loose fitting woollen socks should be worn.

FOOTWEAR

Shoes must be chosen carefully. It is best to have lace-up and soft-upper shoes so that your feet will be held firmly during walking. To be sure that the shoes are suited for your feet test walk on a solid area of the store NOT ON THE CARPETED FLOOR.

It is best to have your feet measured when buying shoes. Feet must be measured when standing as this is when the true size is known.

It is important that you wear socks/stockings/hosiery that will not restrict the movement of the foot. Garters also will impede circulation. Avoid going barefooted.

FIRST-AID

If any minor injury should happen to you (e.g. cuts, bruises) clean the area with surgical spirit and apply a mild antiseptic cream. (e.g. savlon). DO NOT apply adhesive strapping directly to the area, DO NOT wrap the strapping around toes as this will restrict circulation.

Blisters on the feet should be left alone and should not be punctured (pricked) to release the fluid but should be left to dry up on their own. Should they open of their own accord and discharge their contents, dress with an antiseptic dressing.

It will be necessary to visit your Chiropodist or G.P. if the injury is not responding to the treatment.

UNHEALTHY FEET

If you notice any discharge coming from a break in the skin, from a nail or a corn it is important that you visit your Chiropodist.

If there is pain, itching, swelling or colour change in the feet or legs visit the Chiropodist.

For more information about footcare for the elderly contact the British Chiropody Association. 149 Bath Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire. To identify a Qualified Chiropodist look for the letters MBChA, MSSCh or FSSCh.