Foot Care Encyclopedia Article

Foot Care

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Foot Care

Foot care involves all aspects of preventative and corrective care of the foot and ankle. Doctors specializing in foot care are called podiatrists. Three-quarters of people have foot problems during their lives from wearing ill-fitting shoes, general wear and tear, an injury, or as a complication of disease. People with diabetes mellitus or circulatory diseases are 20 times more likely to have foot problems than the general public. Foot problems include: foot pain, joint inflammation, plantar warts, fungal infections (like athlete's foot), nerve disorders, torn ligaments, broken bones, bacterial infections, and tissue injuries (like frostbite). People with diabetes or circulatory disorders should be alert to even small foot problems. In these people, a break in the skin can lead to infection, gangrene, and amputation.

Daily foot care for people likely to develop foot problems includes washing the feet in tepid water with mild soap and oiling the feet with vegetable oil or a lanolin-based lotion. Toenails should be cut straight across above the level of the skin after soaking the feet in tepid water. Corns and calluses, athletes foot and plantar warts in high risk patients should only be treated by a doctor. Many people with diabetes or circulatory disorders have problems with cold feet. These problems can be reduced by not **smoking**, wearing warm socks, not crossing the legs while sitting or not sitting in one position too long, and avoiding constricting stockings. People with circulatory problems should not use heating pads or hot water bottles on their feet. No special preparation other than an understanding of the nature of foot problems is necessary to begin routine foot care. With regular care, foot disorders such as infections, skin ulcers, and gangrene can be prevented.