Feet Fix'n

Spring 2010

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Childhood obesity changes foot structure

We've all heard about the negative cardiovascular effects of being overweight. Excess pounds stress the heart, raise blood pressure, and can lead to stroke. Now researchers in Scotland have found that even the feet are affected by obesity.

According to two studies conducted at Glasgow Caledonian University, obesity in children causes difficulty walking and maintaining balance, and is linked to foot deformities and structural abnormalities. Not only were the feet of obese children wider and longer than normal-weight children, the children's excessive weight caused them to be unstable when walking. They spent significantly more time balancing on two feet when walking, less time on one foot than normal-weight children, and walked more slowly.

The feet, of course, must support the body's weight. While normal feet are designed to absorb the shock of walking and running, children's feet—which are still developing and are more malleable than adults'—are especially vulnerable to deformity and structural abnormalities caused by the extra stress put on the foot by the excess weight.

Researchers believe there may be several causes of the structural changes in the feet of obese children. It's possible that the extra weight puts greater pressure on the joints in the foot, leading to abnormal foot alignment and function. In addition, hormones may impact the production of fatty tissue or bone formation.

This research suggests that a professional evaluation of the feet and gait of overweight children, and corrective treatment when needed, might help ensure long-term mobility and healthy foot development.

Dr. Nancy A. Jagodzinski

Board Certified
Podiatric Physician & Surgeon

Congratulations to Dr. "J" for being selected as one of America's Top Podiatrists for two consecutive years by the Consumers' Research Council of America.

"With care... this pair will last a lifetime."

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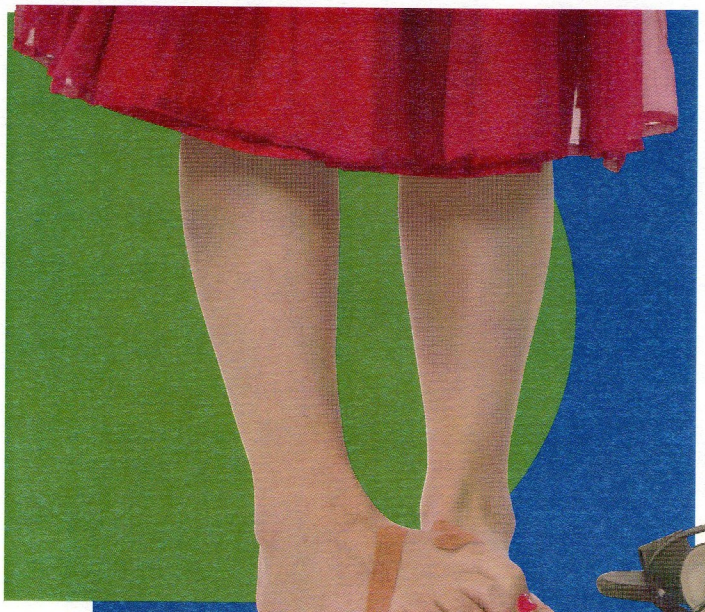

NEW POWDER SHOWS PROMISE IN TREATING FOOT WOUNDS

Open wounds and ulcers of the foot can be difficult to treat, especially for people with diabetes. In a recent survey, nearly 20 percent of people with diabetes reported that they have had a foot sore that wouldn't heal.

Open sores on the feet can also be the result of inflammatory bowel disease or skin cancer.

Research results released in 2009 from a study of a new wound powder show promise in treating these stubborn open sores. The new wound-dressing powder used in the study forms a flexible film which acts similarly to a layer of skin, helping to retain moisture, protect the wound, and allow enough air needed for the wound to close.

Focusing on unusual wounds with irregular shapes and causes, the study, which was led by a Temple University podiatrist, demonstrated that the powder dressing was effective in helping to close the tough-to-treat foot wounds. It also helped to prepare wounds for additional treatments such as skin grafts and sutures. While more research is needed before the treatment is considered for more standard wounds, the study is giving us new avenues to investigate to help our patients heal more quickly and easily.

Relief for pregnant feet

Expectant mothers are often urged to get off their feet, and for good reason. The additional weight of pregnancy can alter a woman's center of gravity that, in turn, can cause a swayback posture called lordosis. This plus the extra pounds puts pressure on the feet that can add to a variety of pregnancy-related issues.

SWELLING

Fluid retention, extra blood accumulation (especially in the last months of pregnancy), and hormones can cause feet to swell. This is where putting your feet up can help, along with foot stretches and sitting with the feet flat on the floor (uncross your legs and ankles when seated).

CRAMPING

The hormone progesterone relaxes the blood vessels to prevent high blood pressure caused by the increased blood volume of pregnancy. This, along with pelvic pressure from increased weight that compresses the veins and reduces circulation to the feet, can cause foot and leg cramps. Stretches, especially rotating the ankles, and wearing supportive shoes can help.

FLAT FEET

The extra body weight can flatten the arches, causing the feet to roll inward when walking, which is called overpronation. Replace high heels with comfortable shoes with arch support and a sole and heel that provide shock absorption. You may want to consider over-the-counter, arch-supporting shoe inserts.

For specialized treatment of pregnancy-related foot and ankle problems, ask your obstetrician about a podiatry referral.

Splints can improve walking after a stroke

For people who suffer strokes that cause difficulty walking, a new review of clinical studies shows that ankle and foot splints help restore the ability to walk and maintain balance. The Cochrane Collaboration research analyzed 14 clinical studies involving 420 participants which demonstrated that stroke patients who used splints had improved walking and balance. According to Kyle Covington of Duke University School of Medicine, "This review confirms...that the lower-extremity splints make an immediate, positive impact on a patient's balance and walking ability."

When tiptoe means TROUBLE

Have you ever noticed how babies learning to toddle tend to walk on their tiptoes? Called toe walking or "equinus gait," it is common and unremarkable, especially if everything else is normal. Even if it extends from toddlerhood into early childhood, many cases of toe walking are just habit and will be outgrown.

Even so, it's worth keeping an eye on because, in some instances, toe walking can be a sign of a condition that needs evaluation and treatment. Spinal-cord abnormalities and neuromuscular conditions such as cerebral palsy or muscular dystrophy can cause toe walking in a child. Also, differences in leg length or an Achilles tendon that is too short can also result in toe walking. Depending on the cause and the severity, treatment options may range from physical therapy and stretching exercises to casting, muscle-relaxant injections, or even surgery.

To rule out causes other than just habit, it's important to have your child's toe walking evaluated.

GET READY FOR BAREFOOT SEASON

How to remove splinters

Nothing ruins the carefree feeling of going barefoot more than a splinter in your foot. It can mean pain and problems if not properly removed.

If it's tiny and doesn't hurt, you can usually leave it alone; a superficial sliver will work its way out as the body's immune system sheds it naturally.

If it's tiny and painful—like a cactus spine or nettle—touch the area lightly with sticky tape and pull. If that fails, apply wax hair remover, then peel.

If it's large—like a thorn—get a needle and tweezers, sterilize with rubbing alcohol, and use the needle to expose the splinter's end and the tweezers to pull it out. Wash and apply antibiotic ointment.

CALL US IF:

- **You can't get it all out.**
- **It's deeply embedded.**
- **It has a barb on the end (like a fishhook).**
- **The pain gets worse.**
- **You develop a fever or it starts to look infected.**
- **You are diabetic or have peripheral vascular disease. (If you have either of these health conditions, never attempt self-treatment; call our office for an appointment.)**

Dr. Nancy A. Jagodzinski
Ankle & Foot Center of Fox Valley
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

REMINDER:

Please remember to bring in your shoes for the homeless.

Please visit us online at www.feetfxn.com

A "BOOM" in arthritis treatment

As the generation of Americans born between 1946 and 1964, collectively known as baby boomers, reaches retirement age, many aren't ready to slow down, even if their bodies are. As a result, they're causing a "boom" in treatment for arthritis. And thanks to advances in medical technology, they have more treatment options now than their parents' generation.

Among the more than 100 different types of arthritis, the most common forms to affect the feet are posttraumatic arthritis that most often affects the ankle and osteoarthritis, especially in the big toe.

In the early stages, custom orthotics can ease the discomfort and mobility restrictions of foot and ankle osteoarthritis. Treatment also typically includes anti-inflammatory medications, ranging from over-the-counter painkillers to prescription drugs.

For early-stage osteoarthritis in the big toe, improved surgical procedures now offer better pain relief and joint movement. More severe cases may require surgery to fuse the joint or replace it.

Thanks to stronger screws and hardware, joint-fusion surgery is easier, reducing recovery time, and its benefits last longer. A new generation of big toe joint replacements shows promise.

Arthritis in the ankle is most likely the result of an injury earlier in life. New surgical techniques that transplant small plugs of cartilage from one part of the ankle to another can slow down joint deterioration in some patients. New and improved ankle replacements are being developed as well.

With newer and better treatments available, there's no need to suffer with the pain and limited mobility of foot and ankle arthritis. By seeking treatment for arthritis at its earliest stages, your odds of preventing irreversible joint damage will be improved.

FOOT FACT

The average person takes 8,000 to 10,000 steps a day, which adds up to about 115,000 miles over a lifetime. That's enough to go around the circumference of the earth four times.

From the office of
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Days & Hours

Mon.	9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.
Tues.	9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.
Wed.	9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.
Thurs.	9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.
Fri.	9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.
Sat.	9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Appointment and Emergency Phone:
(630) 778-7670

Web site:
www.feetfxn.com