



**Comfort
Keepers®**

a **sodexo** brand

How Aging Affects Our Feet

What Changes with Age?

Henry David Thoreau once wrote, “An early-morning walk is a blessing for the whole day.” From sunup to sundown, we rely on our feet constantly to get us wherever we need to go. They are undoubtedly the unsung heroes of the human body, but over time, age-related changes – not to mention normal wear and tear – can take their toll. And for some older adults, being able to walk at all is a blessing in and of itself. So, what exactly changes with our feet as we get older?

The American Podiatric Association estimates that the average person will have walked 75,000 miles by the time he or she is 50 years of age.

To start with, there’s a decrease in collagen production which causes the natural cushioning of the feet to diminish. Without this padding, the feet lose their ability to absorb shocks, often leading to severe soreness and pain when walking. Blood circulation can also begin to slow as we age, especially for those dealing with diabetes, vein disease, or other conditions. Proper circulation is crucial in keeping the human body healthy, and when the feet don’t get the blood supply they need, several problems can arise – severe swelling being chief among them. Arthritis, particularly in the big toe or top of the foot, can lead to stiffness, dull aches, and decreased range of motion.

While all of these changes are certainly common, seniors should not assume that foot pain is to be simply tolerated. Seniors can take steps to care for their feet, reduce their risk of the aforementioned problems, and maintain their independence. With these tips, seniors can embrace Thoreau’s words and enjoy all that the day has to offer.

Foot Care Tips for Seniors

- Invest in proper footwear that conforms to the foot (not the other way around). Comfort is certainly key, but flexibility is also important. It’s highly recommended that seniors buy shoes that have a half-inch gap between the tip and the longest toe.
- Take regular walks, paying particular attention to proper posture (head erect, back straight, and arms swinging).
- Have feet checked frequently by a podiatrist, especially if diagnosed with diabetes.
- Wash feet thoroughly with soap and water, especially between the toes. It’s also imperative that they are dried thoroughly to help prevent fungal infections.
- Use lotion after washing/drying to reduce the risk of the skin becoming dry and cracked.
- Avoid walking while barefoot, to help avoid cuts and scrapes.
- Ensure proper toenail maintenance by cutting across the nail and avoiding trimming the corners.
- Promote proper circulation by stretching daily, keeping the feet propped up, and wiggling toes after sitting for long periods of time.
- For any acute foot pain, apply the *RICE* treatment: rest, ice, compression, and elevation. Seniors should get off their feet, put ice on the injury for 20 minutes every hour, wrap it with a bandage, and keep the foot above the knee.

How Comfort Keepers® Can Help

It's easy to take our feet for granted, but there's no denying that they play an essential role in maintaining our overall independence. At Comfort Keepers®, our goal is to help seniors and other adults live happier, healthier lives and enjoy the things that give them joy. Our caregivers can help clients care for their feet by reinforcing the best practices listed above. And if walking is difficult, we can provide mobility assistance as well as transportation to and from places around town.

For more information about how we can elevate the human spirit for senior clients, contact your local Comfort Keepers location today.

References

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