

FALLS PREVENTION: MANAGING COMMON FOOT PROBLEMS

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FALLS AND FOOT PAIN

Foot problems and foot pain are associated with increased risk of recurrent falls in older adults.

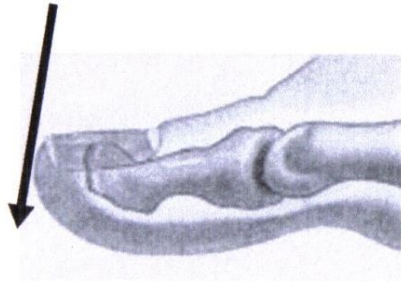
Fear of falling, perhaps due to having a history of falls, can lead to avoidance of certain day to day activities . This can be detrimental to quality of life and physical activity, A. Awale et al. (2018).

COMMON FOOT PROBLEMS

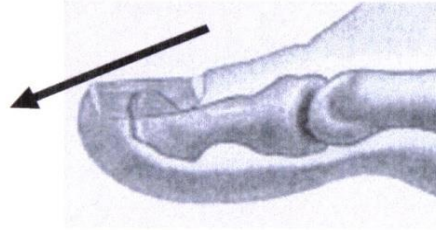
- Difficulty cutting toenails
- Nail pathologies
- Skin pathologies
- Toe deformities



HOW TO FILE YOUR NAILS



File the length



If the nails are thick angle the file

FILE AWAY FROM THE BODY

The nail should be left until it grows past the pulp of the toe



CORRECT



INCORRECT

WHEN FILING THE NAILS ENSURE THEY ARE DRY AND FILE WEEKLY

CURVED 'INVOLUTED' TOENAILS

- Toenails should be filed weekly to maintain the length, before bathing.
- Avoid cutting nails too short, you should be able to feel the edge of the nail when running finger over tip of toe.
- An ingrown toenails is caused when a piece of nail punctures the skin.
- Cutting nails too short increases the risk of ingrown toenails.
- Should be referred to NHS podiatry department, which would be triaged as an urgent referral.

Curved "involuted" nail



Ingrown toenail

THICKENED AND FUNGAL NAILS

- Thicker nails can be difficult to cut particularly in patients with poor mobility who struggle to reach their feet.
- These can also be maintained with weekly nail filing, filing thickness as well as length.
- Ensure footwear has a round, spacious toebox with a soft upper material helps to reduce pressure and discomfort.



NEGLECTED NAILS

- Risk of causing wounds – to adjacent toes, legs.
- Could be avoided with weekly nail filing.
- Can make wearing footwear difficult and increase risk of falls.
- Carers, family or friends may be able to help if patients are unable to cut or file their own toenails.
- Private podiatry services are available for patients who do not meet NHS Lothian podiatry criteria.



CALLOUS / CORNS

- Areas of hard skin
- Often painful, usually situated on areas of high pressure.
- Ill-fitting footwear can contribute to formation of corns and callous.

Self management

- Feet should be washed daily, paying particular attention to between the toes. Feet should be soaked for no more than 10-15 minutes.
- Apply emollients to both feet daily but not between the toes.
- Regular filing of skin with emery board.
- Wearing spacious and supportive footwear reduces pressure to prominent joints.



DIABETES

Diabetic foot screening should be carried out by a health professional at least every 2 years to assess their circulation, sensation and overall foot health.

Patients should ensure they wear socks, check inside footwear, and not walk barefoot to avoid standing on sharp objects.

Patients should check their feet daily for any cuts, scrapes, or any changes.

Any wound should be referred immediately to NHS Lothian podiatry department.

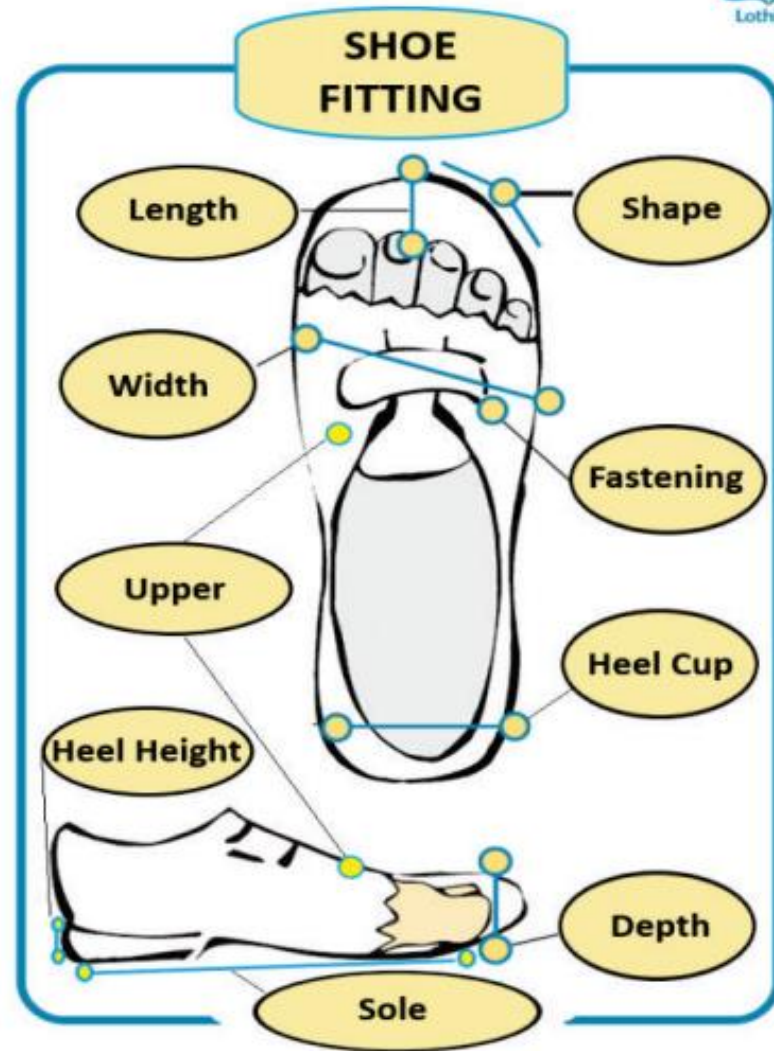


TOE DEFORMITIES

- If footwear is too tight, increased pressure on prominent joints may lead to callous / corn formation. This increases risk of ulceration.
- Footwear with soft, stretchy upper material is advised.
- Daily emollients to both feet is important to keep skin soft.
- Gel or silicone devices between toes can reduce pressure to next toe, however will not fix deformity.
- Gel toe covers can also be used to cover toes, providing cushioning



FOOTWEAR



FOOTWEAR — EXAMPLES OF GOOD STYLES



SLIPPERS

Walking barefoot or wearing socks without shoes increases risk of falls at home, J. Kelsey et al (2010).
Certain types of slippers should be avoided as these can also contribute to a fall.



Unsuitable

- Soft, flimsy sole
- Backless
- Shallow
- Hard upper material



Suitable

- Velcro fastening
- Deep heel counter
- Soft, stretchy upper material
- Spacious
- Firm sole
- Correct size



REFERRING TO NHS Lothian PODIATRY DEPARTMENT

Self referral form is available online at:

<https://services.nhslothian.scot/podiatry/podiatry-community-service-self-referral-form-270623-v1/>

Referral forms can also be given at GP practice reception.

Podiatry department: 0131 536 1627

SUMMARY

Looking after your feet is an important daily task which can help maintain comfort and mobility.

Weekly nail filing can help to keep nails at a comfortable length, and daily emollients can prevent hard skin forming.

Carers, family or friends may be able to help if a patient is unable to carry out these tasks themselves.

Wearing supportive, suitable footwear is extremely important to reduce the risk of falls.



REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

A. Awale et al. (2017) 'Foot function, foot pain, and falls in older adults: the Framingham foot study' *Gerontology* vol. 63, issue 4. Accessed: 20/09/2023. Available at:

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[Looking after your feet to help prevent falls | NHS inform](#)

[Personal Footcare Guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

<https://services.nhslothian.scot/podiatry/resources/>

