

About Your Feet

Did you know?

- Each foot has 26 bones, 33 joints, 36 muscles and more than one mile of blood vessels and nerves.

Get the Right Fit

Have your feet measured every time you shop for shoes. Shop in the afternoon or evening, since feet swell by as much as a full size over the course of a day. Stand up to be sure your weight is distributed evenly on the foot being measured. If your feet are different sizes, choose shoes in the larger size. Walk around in the shoes, preferably on both hard and soft surfaces. Select rubber heels and soles, which absorb shock better than leather or synthetics. Consider buying a larger size to accommodate insoles for extra cushioning, and avoid heels higher than one inch.

Feet and Balance

Foot ailments can affect walking balance. Loss of elastin reduces flexibility of many joints of the foot. Fat pads that protect soles, heels, and ball of the foot disappear. Calluses may form on weight-bearing points of the foot, causing pain and changing alignment and gait. Dehydration or general thinning of the skin may cause bruising and wounds that are slow to heal. Toe nails become thicker, brittle, and more difficult to care for.

Exercise Your Feet

These easy exercises can help strengthen and stretch foot muscles. Do them seated or standing, first one foot and then the other.

1. Heel raise, toe point, toe curl hold each of these positions for five seconds:
 - a. Lift heel as high as possible, keeping toes and ball of foot on floor.
 - b. Point foot down as far as possible, and leave only bit toe touching floor.
 - c. Lift whole foot off ground curl toes, point foot straight down, and place toe "knuckles" on floor, exerting enough pressure to stretch toes and top of foot. Repeat 10 times.



2. Towel Lifts
 - a. Raise a small towel off floor, using only toes. Repeat five times.



3. Pick-Ups
 - a. Pick up a marble or squeeze a soft spongy ball with bottom of foot.



4. Heel Stretches

- a. Stand 18 inches away from wall, with palms on wall at shoulder height and width. Extend left leg back two feet, and bend right knee. Keep left leg straight, pressure left heel into floor. Toes should point forward. Hold 15 seconds, then switch sides. Do twice daily, 10 times for each leg. Helps relieve heel, ankle, and calf pain and tightness. Also good for preventing foot pain.



5. Tap toes 50 times daily. Pull toes up toward shin between each tap.

Give Your Feet a Hand

As an inexpensive alternative to mechanical foot massagers, try “tootsie rolls”: Move your feet back and forth over a rolling pin or golf ball for a few minutes. Or try these self-massage techniques. Repeat at least three times on each foot.

- Using thumb, heel of hand, or knuckles, stroke bottom of opposite foot in a series of straight lines from heel to toe, starting with inner arch and progressing to outer edge, then back again.
- Place thumbs in the space between the bases of the big and first toes of either foot. Move thumbs straight back across top of your foot to just above your ankle. Repeat for the other three toe spaces.
- Press bottom of foot with opposite thumb, using a small circular motion. Repeat until you’ve covered every part of the sole.
- “Draw” diagonal lines across bottom of foot with tips of index and middle fingers of opposite hand. Move from heel to ball of foot and back again.

