

FOOTPRINTS

AN INFORMATIONAL NEWSLETTER FOR PATIENTS OF APMA MEMBER PODIATRISTS

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SUMMER EDITION

ARE YOU GOING BAREFOOT THIS SUMMER? REMEMBER THESE TIPS.



Warm summer weather may tempt you to strip off your shoes and enjoy being barefoot, but think twice before skipping your footwear! Walking barefoot on the beach, during a hike, in your yard, or on the sidewalk comes with potentially serious risks. Podiatrists advise that you keep your shoes on this summer—especially if you are immunocompromised or have decreased sensation in your feet.

Going barefoot poses several risks during the summer:

BURNS

If you've ever high-stepped across a scorching stretch of sand, you know how painful a burn to the sole of your foot can be. According to APMA member podiatrist Jonathan Rouse, DPM, burns should be treated right away by running the affected area under cold water or using a cold compress and applying a loose bandage. Don't pop any resulting blisters, and make an appointment to see your podiatrist, even if the burns seem minor.

"It's always a good idea to get in and see a podiatrist to rule out any signs of infection," Dr. Rouse said. "We can also provide potential offloading devices and medical-grade bandaging, which can expedite healing."

PUNCTURE WOUNDS

Even soft grass and warm sand may be hiding objects that could injure your feet. If you do sustain a puncture wound, APMA member podiatrist Ami Sheth, DPM, said the first priority should be to clean the injury.

"Make sure you wash the puncture wound well with soap and water to flush it out," Dr. Sheth said. "If the object becomes removed, make sure to bring it when you see your podiatrist!"



INFECTIONS

If not treated right away, a barefoot injury could lead to other complications, such as an infection, so be sure to see a podiatrist as soon as possible. This advice is especially important if you have diabetes or another condition that slows your ability to heal.

Even without sustaining an injury, going barefoot can open you up to infections such as fungal infections (athlete's foot) and viral infections (warts), which thrive in warm, moist environments such as locker rooms and pool decks, so wear flip flops or water shoes whenever possible.



If you cannot resist the urge to go barefoot, follow these steps to keep your feet as safe as possible.

- Remember to **apply sunscreen on your feet**, especially the tops and fronts of your ankles.
- **Have a backup plan.** “It’s always nice to go barefoot, but you do not know what lurks below,” said APMA member podiatrist Priya Parthasarathy, DPM. “It’s better to have a pair of sandals on hand.”
- **Test surface temperature before walking barefoot**, especially with children, Dr. Parthasarathy advised. It could prevent serious burns and injuries.
- Always **look a few steps ahead** and try to **stay on even ground**.
- Before going barefoot, **check your feet for any open cuts**, which might increase the chances of infection. If you notice one, wash your feet right away. Then, apply a dressing and reduce your activity level.

OUR BOTTOM LINE?

Podiatrists always advise wearing shoes to protect your feet. If you do choose to go barefoot this summer, be smart about it. And if you sustain an injury or experience foot pain, see your podiatrist right away.

Visit **APMA.org** for more information or to find a podiatrist near you.