

# FOOTNOTES

An average person covers about 280 000km in their lifetime which is 7 times around the world. The feet support a combined force of several hundred tons during an average day. Most people are born with healthy feet but develop foot problems later in life. You have only one pair, which needs to last you a lifetime.

## COMMON FOOT PROBLEMS

### BUNIONS

- This is an enlargement of bone or tissue situated at the base of the big toe. It is hereditary and can also be caused by incorrect footwear, the way you walk and osteoarthritis. Treatment varies depending on the cause and extent of the bunions. Surgery is an absolute last resort.

### PAINFUL FEET

- Incorrect footwear is one of the biggest causes of foot problems. Feet are squeezed into shoes. A shoe should take on the shape of the foot. Walking barefoot is another cause of foot problems. Although it is best for children to run around barefoot, adults tend to lose the cushioning underneath their feet. This causes excessive strain being placed on the feet, which can result in pain over the balls of the feet, in the arch and heel pain.

### INGROWN TOENAILS

The above causes pain and tenderness along one or both sides of the nail. The big toe is the most common toenail to be affected. The cause of ingrown toenails can be hereditary, poor cutting technique or incorrect, tight fitting shoes. The condition can be treated either conservatively or surgically. To have the entire nail removed is not the cure. In most cases the nail will grow back worse than it was.

### FUNGAL INFECTIONS

- Nails:  
A fungus can infect the nails. It causes discoloration of the nail, thickening and the nail lifts off the nail bed. This condition is highly contagious and spreads easily through sharing nail clippers and files. The condition occurs in damaged nails and if proper nail hygiene is not maintained, i.e. continual use of nail polish and/or artificial nails etc. Treatment varies between oral medication and topical antifungal nail paint. The fungus affects the nail and nailbed and having the entire nail removed will not cure the condition.

- Skin  
Athlete's foot causes the skin to become red, scaly and sometimes itchy. It is highly contagious and is usually contracted when using public bathrooms, swimming pools and trying on infected shoes. Treatment includes foot bathing, topical antifungal cream and disinfecting of shoes.

### CORNS, CALLOUSES AND CRACKED HEELS

The dreaded 3C's when it comes to feet. Corns and callouses are caused by increased pressure or friction in certain areas of the feet. Incorrect footwear, being overweight and faulty biomechanics cause the above. Corn and callous plasters are not to be used as they contain salicylic acid that destroys the healthy skin. Eliminating the cause of the corn or callous and visiting a podiatrist will bring great relief.

Cracked heels are caused by wearing open shoes, having dry or sweaty feet or being overweight. The skin cracks when the forces that keep the skin cells together are overpowered. Cracked heels are very painful and one should consult a podiatrist when suffering with them as they will treat them and advise accordingly.

### PLANTARS WARTS, VERRUCAE, INGROWN WARTS

This is one in the same condition. It usually affects the bottom of the feet in both adults and children. It is a virus, (Human papilloma virus) that is contracted from public bathrooms, swimming pools. To have it surgically removed does not always prove to be successful as it leaves scar tissue under the foot. The most effective treatment is proven to be topical acid treatment applied by a professional or antiviral creams. It can take months to cure them and treatment can sometimes be painful.

### SHOE TIPS

- The shoe needs to take on the shape of your foot not visa versa.
- Try shoes on towards the end of the day, as feet tend to swell and reach their maximum size later.
- Try on both shoes as one foot is usually bigger than the other.
- Alternate your shoes – don't wear the same pair of shoes every day.
- Wear shoes that will give you sufficient cushioning and support, i.e rubber soles etc
- Select and be sure to wear the correct shoe for the activity you are doing, i.e. running shoes for running.