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## Back-to-School Safety with the Right Shoes

A new school year is here, and while it looks different, foot and ankle safety should be a top priority. Every great back-to-school outfit needs a pair of shoes. Here are tips to help you pick out the best pair to keep kids' feet and ankles healthy all year.

**Right Fit:** Kids' feet can grow up to two sizes in six months, so it's important to account for growth when buying new shoes. This doesn't mean buying shoes that are too big—oversized shoes cause the foot to slide forward putting pressure on the toes. A perfect fitting shoe should allow about a finger's width from the end of the shoe to the tip of the big toe. Shoes that are too tight can cause blisters, corns or calluses on the toes, blisters on the heels, or ingrown toenails, which can become infected if left untreated.

**Wear and Tear:** Shoes lose their shock absorption over time, so before letting your child wear their favorite pair, check them for proper cushioning and arch support. The same should be done with new shoes to make sure they're properly padded and supportive. Make sure the toe box flexes easily and to ensure the shoe doesn't bend in the middle of the sole. Worn-out shoes increase the risk for heel pain, Achilles tendonitis and even ankle sprain or fractures due to the shoe being unstable. Replace any shoes with tears or wear around the edges of the sole. Avoid standing for long periods on hardwood and instead stand on carpet, a rug or a mat.

**Shoes for Flat Feet:** Kids with flat feet need shoes with a wider toe box, maximum arch support and shock absorption. The best shoes for flat



feet are oxford, lace-up shoes with enough depth for an orthotic insert if needed.

**E-learning due to COVID-19:** Wearing supportive shoes even at home, can prevent pain and injuries. If germs are a concern with wearing shoes inside, have a designated pair to wear indoors only—as long as it's supportive. Going barefoot on hard surfaces can create additional issues as the foot isn't being supported properly. Avoid standing for long periods on hard wood and instead stand on carpet, a rug or a mat. Take regular breaks to get up and walk around or stretch to keep your feet and ankles healthy, too.

**If you notice signs of ill-fitting shoes or have any questions on proper footwear for your child, schedule an appointment with a foot and ankle surgeon. Find one near you by visiting [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org).**

## Why You Shouldn't Put Off Elective Surgeries



Everyone is different when dealing with pain or managing an injury, but when it comes to putting off treatment of a foot and ankle condition, there comes a time when you can't put it off any longer. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, many opted for virtual appointments over in-person visits to avoid the risk of exposure, but as safety precautions are put in place to keep patients and staff safe, surgeries should be rescheduled to avoid further complications.

Elective surgeries may not seem like something that needs to be done, but if left untreated, these conditions can worsen necessitating more surgical correction in the future or can create other problems, which increase the risk of worsening the original issue. If you have pain or discomfort in one foot or ankle, you may favor that injury with a slight limp to protect the limb. This change in your walk can create more strain and pressure on the opposite foot, even affecting the knee, hip and lower back.

Plenty of foot and ankle conditions start small and seem minor at first, but if left untreated, they can turn into a much bigger issue or affect more than your foot and ankle. Most issues can be treated conservatively, but if left too long, it may require more complicated treatment. Here are some common conditions that can create other issues if left untreated:

- Foot deformities, such as flat foot, can cause strain on tendons and ligaments or joint arthritis.
- Pes Cavus, or a high-arched foot, can cause calluses or foot ulcers because of more pressure on the weightbearing parts of the foot.
- Bunions left untreated can encroach onto the second toe creating a crossover toe, which can lead to a ligament tear.
- Hammertoes can progress quickly and cause a painful blister, callus or even an ulcer if left untreated. They can also progress to a rigid (or inflexible) deformity, which can only be treated surgically if not addressed early on.

Don't wait to see a foot and ankle surgeon if you notice any changes in your feet and ankles; even a "small" injury should be examined. You don't know how bad it is until you have an X-ray or have it checked by a foot and ankle surgeon. **If you're experiencing pain or notice a change in the way you're walking, make an appointment with a foot and ankle surgeon as soon as possible. Visit [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org) to find one in your area.**

## Got Heel Pain?

Many suffer from heel pain, but few know how to treat it. It could mean a million things, or it could be nothing, but heel pain is your foot's way of telling you, something is not right. Foot and ankle surgeons categorize heel pain into four categories: plantar fasciitis, Achilles tendonitis, bursitis and nerve pain. The diagnosis depends on the exact location of the pain and how it affects the leg's mechanical movement.

**Plantar fasciitis:** The most common cause for heel pain is inflammation of the plantar fascia or band of tissue extending from the heel to the toes. The fascia becomes inflamed which causes pain in the heel or arch of the foot. Plantar fasciitis can be first treated non-surgically with stretching exercises, rest, shoe pads, orthotics, footwear modifications, night splints and injection therapy. Most cases respond well to nonsurgical treatments, but some do worsen and require surgery to correct it.

**Achilles tendonitis:** The inflammation of the Achilles tendon is an overuse condition, seen often in athletes playing high-impact sports such as basketball or tennis. These sports often have a sudden increase of repetitive motion using the Achilles tendon, which puts too much stress too quickly on the tendon, which can lead to microinjuries to the tendon. Treatment includes immobilizing the foot with a walking boot or cast and physical therapy. Orthotics and ice are also used to manage pain. If it's a severe case and nonsurgical methods don't help, surgery may be necessary to repair it fully.



**Bursitis:** Another common cause of heel pain when the fat pad of the heel is swollen and red from inflammation of a small fluid-filled sac inside the heel known as the bursa. The bursa protects the heel from friction and can become inflamed from repetitive motion or irritation from shoes. With bursitis, the toes and heel are most often affected. Treatment includes resting the foot, ice, anti-inflammatories, padding and steroid injections to ease inflammation and pain. If more conservative treatment doesn't work, surgery may be needed.

**Whatever your heel pain may be, visit your local foot and ankle surgeon for a proper diagnosis and to start treatment as soon as possible. To find one in your area, visit [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org).**

## It's Fall Yardwork Season



Fall brings many wonderful things, but with the fall of the first leaf comes more yardwork. Keeping your yard maintained takes a lot of time and effort, and with that comes the risk of injury. Keep your feet and ankles safe throughout your yard duties with these tips:

**Proper Footwear:** Even with warmer temperatures, sandals or flip flops should never be worn when working in the yard. Yardwork often means sharp objects, including blades from power equipment or sharp sticks, and sturdy, close-toed shoes are the best way to keep your feet protected.

**Don't Work on Wet Surfaces:** Avoid working on any surface that poses a slip or fall risk, especially when carrying heavy loads. Wet grass or leaves can create slippery terrain and wreak havoc on feet and ankles.

**Limber Up:** Yardwork can be a workout, so remember to stretch, warm up and ease into it. Stretching beforehand can help to avoid stressing your muscles and tendons in the feet, ankles and calves to keep you safe throughout each task.

**Keep Kids Away from Equipment:** Leaf blowers, power lawnmowers and chainsaws should never be left out where kids are present or other inexperienced users have access to them. Keep kids at a safe distance when working in the yard to avoid any accidents.

If you notice any pain when working in the yard this year, follow up with a foot and ankle surgeon as soon as possible for treatment. **Visit [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org) to find a foot and ankle surgeon in your area.**

