

In This Issue

Prepare for Walkathons Foot Pain Shouldn't Ruin Your Golf Swing Kids' Foot Conditions Smoking & Bone Healing

Prepare for Spring Walkathons to Avoid Foot & Ankle Injuries

As the long winter winds down, you might be anxious to sign up for a spring charity walk to support your favorite cause. However, without adequate preparation, long-distance walking after spending the past few months mostly indoors can result in pain or injury to the tendons and bones in your feet and ankles. The risk is especially high if you do not engage in regular exercise.

Walking is often considered an easy, low-impact activity, but that is not always the case. Walking for longer periods of time or for long distances can take a toll on your body's support structures. Over longer distances, your feet and ankles can swell or become sore or you could twist an ankle, develop tendonitis or rupture an Achilles tendon. And if you have bunions or diabetes, you are more likely to suffer a foot or ankle injury if you do not properly prepare for the event.

While conditioning programs to help participants prepare for a distance walk are limited, you can get ready by walking a little bit each day in the weeks leading up to the event. Gradually increase the intensity and duration of your walks and listen to your body.

Know when to take a break and be aware of the signs of a minor injury in your feet and ankles to help prevent it from turning into a major injury.

Schedule an appointment with your local foot and ankle surgeon to have your feet and ankles evaluated before a walking event and to get tips on proper training techniques. To find a foot and ankle surgeon near you, visit FootHealthFacts.org.



Is Foot Pain Ruining Your Golf Swing?



As you head to your favorite golf course this spring, make sure your feet are in shape before approaching the tee box. Your big toe, heel and ball of your foot are the spots most likely to cause pain that can ruin your golf swing.

Behind these pain-prone spots can lie stiff joints, stretched-out tissues and even nerve damage. However, pain relief is possible and often does not require surgery.

The three most common foot conditions that can affect your perfect golf swing are:

- neuromas
- arthritis
- heel pain

Neuromas are nerves that become thickened, enlarged and painful because they have been compressed or irritated. A neuroma in the ball of your foot can cause significant pain as your body transfers its weight from one foot to the other while swinging the club.

Arthritis can cause pain in the joint of your big toe and can make it difficult to follow through with a swing.

Heel pain typically results from an inflammation of the plantar fascia (the band of tissue that extends from your heel to the ball of your foot). Heel pain can make it difficult for golfers to maintain a solid stance during crucial portions of the swing.

Other conditions, such as ankle arthritis or ankle instability, can affect how your weight shifts during a golf swing. Achilles tendonitis can also throw off your balance during a swing, while ill-fitting golf shoes may cause corns and calluses that make standing and walking uncomfortable.

Make sure your feet and ankles are in top condition before you hit the green this spring by scheduling an appointment with a foot and ankle surgeon. Visit FootHealthFacts.org to locate a foot and ankle surgeon in your area.

Foot Health Facts on Children's Foot Conditions



Pain in a child's foot or ankle is never normal. Any pain that lasts more than a few days or is severe enough to limit the child's walking should be evaluated by a foot and ankle surgeon. Foot problems commonly seen in children include:

Pediatric Flatfoot: Most children with flat feet have no symptoms. However, sometimes they may have trouble participating in physical activities or sports or may appear to walk or run awkwardly. Some complain of pain or cramping in their feet, legs or knees.

Calcaneal Apophysitis (Sever's Disease): Calcaneal apophysitis

is an inflammation of the heel's growth plate. It typically affects children between the ages of eight and 14 years old because the heel bone does not fully develop until at least age 14. Until then, new bone forms at the growth plate, a weak area located at the back of the heel. When too much stress is placed on the growth plate, inflammation can develop.

Ingrown Toenails: Tight shoes or socks or incorrect nail trimming can cause ingrown toenails in children, although sometimes the tendency for nails to curve inward is inherited. Serious infections can result when the nail breaks the skin. Parents should never try to dig the nail out at home.

Plantar Warts: These warts can develop anywhere on the foot, but they typically appear on the bottom of the foot. Plantar warts, which are caused by the human papilloma virus, commonly occur in children and adolescents. These warts grow deep into the skin and can make walking or standing painful.

If your child experiences any foot or ankle pain that is affecting his or her ability to walk, contact your foot and ankle surgeon immediately to make an appointment.

How Smoking Affects Bone Healing



Not only can smoking cause lung cancer and cardiovascular disease, it can affect your healing time after foot or ankle surgery. Studies show smokers take nearly 50 percent longer to heal and often suffer side effects and complications, such as:

- Nonunion or failure of the bone to mend
- Blood clotting
- Wounds that break open
- Greater risk of infection

If you smoke and are facing surgery, it is recommended that you:

- Quit smoking, even if it is just for a few weeks before and after surgery.

- If the surgery is an emergency and you do not have weeks in advance to prepare and quit, then at least quit for the weeks following surgery so you can heal better.
- Educate yourself. Smokers who realize the negative side effects of the habit can often form a healthy, nonsmoking habit and maintain it.

If you are a smoker and are scheduled to have foot or ankle surgery soon, be sure to speak with your foot and ankle surgeon about how to reduce your risk of complications and improve your healing process.

