

# Foot Notes

WINTER 2015

HEALTHY FEET FOR AN ACTIVE LIFE

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## Avoid Ankle Pain This Winter

Residents of the northern half of the country are well into the season of snow, ice and sleet—all of which can contribute to ankle injuries. Even those who live in warmer states can suffer sprains and fractures during the winter while playing indoor court sports or vacationing in snow resort areas.

If you hurt your ankle, one of the first things you might wonder is “Is it broken or sprained?” The old saying, “If you can walk on it, it’s not broken,” isn’t always true. With a fracture, you may hear a sound when the injury occurs and experience “pinpoint” pain at the break site.

If you experience an ankle injury, follow the RICE method (rest, ice, compression, elevation) to help reduce pain and control swelling around the joint. If the injury doesn’t improve within a day or two, come to our office to have it evaluated.

### Tips for Avoiding Winter Ankle Injuries

- Keep areas around outside doorways well-lit so icy patches are visible.
- Wear shoes or boots with a traction sole to prevent slipping.
- Check for slippery spots before getting out of a car.
- Avoid wearing high-heeled shoes outdoors.
- Stretch and warm up before recreational sports activities.



## Protect Your Feet from Frostbite

Don’t let Jack Frost nip at your toes this winter. When your feet, hands, nose and cheeks are exposed to extreme cold, you’re at risk for frostbite, which can result in tissue damage and possible tissue loss.

Frostbite occurs when a body part is exposed to extreme cold. If conditions are cold enough for the water within the tissues to freeze and form ice crystals, cell death can occur. Frostbite in the foot typically develops in stages beginning with cold toes that turn bright red in color. Over time, the color in the toes continues to change and darkens into purples and blues and eventually black, indicating severe frostbite. Those with diabetic neuropathy, or loss of feeling in the feet, are especially at risk and should check their toes regularly for signs of frostbite.

Frostbite can also cause numbness in the toes, but numb toes can indicate other conditions. If you are experiencing numbness or discoloration in the tissue of your toes, call our office to schedule an appointment. If you suspect the numbness is due to frostbite, seek medical attention immediately.

### Preventing Frostbite

- Limit your exposure to extreme cold.
- Keep your feet as warm and dry as possible.
- If frostbite is suspected in your feet, immerse them in warm water (approximately 100 degrees Fahrenheit).
- Avoid vigorous rubbing/massaging and dry heat (such as from a hair dryer), as burns may result if numbness is present.

# *Ingrown Toenails Can Cause Big Problems for Kids*

Ingrown toenails are a common and mostly benign foot problem that often occurs in children and teenagers. However, they can become a big problem when parents attempt at-home treatment or “bathroom surgery,” which can worsen the condition and lead to potentially serious complications such as severe pain, infection of the skin or underlying bone and possible deformity of the toe.

Ingrown toenails occur when the corners or sides of the nail curve and grow into the soft tissue of the toe. The most common symptom is swelling and redness in the toes, especially the big toe. Some children may complain that their feet hurt when wearing shoes. If your child has an ingrown toenail, soak the foot in warm soapy water and check his/her shoes for proper fit. If these measures don't help, make an appointment with our office for an examination and treatment. Don't try to cut away the ingrown part of the nail.

If ingrown toenails are a frequent problem for your child, a surgical procedure may be required to permanently remove a portion of the nail.



## **To help your child avoid painful ingrown toenails and possible infection:**

- Keep his/her feet clean.
- Cut nails straight across—do not round off the corners.
- Don't allow nails to grow longer than the tip of the toe.
- Don't let the child wear hand-me-down shoes.
- Ensure that shoes are wide enough in the toe box to avoid crowding of the toes.

