



Help Protect Your Children's Feet While Playing Sports



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Children and Sports

All parents know that children take to sports like ducks to water. Participation in sports develops a sense of self discipline, teamwork, and recognition of the importance of a healthy body -- good habits that last a lifetime.

Training Emphasis

Every child physically matures at his or her own rate, and has a different degree of athletic ability. Early training should emphasize proper technique and basic movement skills in all sports. Podiatric physicians, specialists in treating the lower extremities, say children who concentrate on a single sport at too young an age are more likely to develop injuries of the foot and ankle. Save specialization in sports for the late teens.

Footwear

Whether parents like it or not, part of a child's image revolves

around footwear. For good foot health, the condition of the shoes are more important than the price tag or brand name.

Podiatric physicians agree it's often better to buy a child two \$50 pairs of shoes than a single \$100 pair, so the shoes can be rotated, to avoid rapid wear deterioration. Because a child's feet are constantly growing, it is important to allow at least one finger's width from the end of the longest toe when buying shoes.

Growing Bones and Ligaments

The immature bones of children are different from those of adults. The "growth plates" in children's bones do not finish closing until age 15-17 in boys and 13-15 in girls. When stressed, these plates are more susceptible to injury than the tendons and ligaments that support the joints. Podiatric physicians warn repetitive overuse can cause inflammation of the growth plates. They advise parents to promote diverse physical activities for their children rather than one sport.

Injuries and Treatments

Many children suffer from mild "torsional" imbalances, commonly known as in-toeing and out-toeing. Most children outgrow these imbalances without medical treatment. However, if a child has obvious torsional imbalances, he or she may be more susceptible to injury. If that is the case, keep a close eye out for foot and ankle injuries associated with sports

activity. Foot injuries commonly seen in very active children include:



- **Ankle Sprains.** In older children, stretched or torn ligaments in the ankle, known as sprains, are more common than fractures. A sprain may cause extensive swelling around the ankle just like a fracture. Immediate treatment is crucial to quick healing. A podiatric physician can provide treatment as well as recommend balancing and

strengthening exercises to restore coordination quickly.

- **Fractures.** Fractures from overuse in child-athletes are commonly seen in podiatric medical offices. Growth plates are particularly susceptible to injuries, but mid-shaft fractures of the bone also occur. If a fracture is not severe, rest and immobilization may be the best treatment. More complicated injuries may require casting or surgical correction. If swelling and pain persist, see a podiatric physician.

- **Sever's Disease.** An inflammation of a growth plate, Sever's Disease is often felt as pain behind the heel caused by inflammation of the apophysis, a growth center where a tendon is

attached to the bone. Rest, ice, and heel lifts are usually prescribed.

- **Shin splints and stress fractures.** Shin splints are microtears or inflammation of the anterior leg muscles, as are Achilles tendon pulls in the posterior region of the leg. Again, rest is most important in healing these injuries. If pain is persistent, see a podiatrist.

Dr. Tsyganov's warm and capable manner and skilled staff makes a visit with your child a very positive and healing experience. Your family is in very competent care when the need for a podiatrist arises!

Based on a document produced in cooperation with the: *American Podiatric Medical Association.*

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Foot Care Tips To Keep Your Feet Healthy

Foot Care Dos

- While drying your feet with towel, make sure to wipe the area between your toes as well.
- Always wash your feet before going to bed, dry them well and moisturize with a cream or lotion.
- While applying polish on your toenail, always start with the smallest toe and move across to the rest.
- Always wear cotton socks with your shoes. Not only are they comfortable, but also let your feet breathe well and avoid foot odor.
- If you have any hard skin on your feet, rub the area gently, with a pumice stone or a skin file.
- Always cut your toenails straight across and make sure that they are not too short.
- While wearing a shoe, keep in mind the activity that you will be indulging in. For instance, you should not wear tennis shoes if you want to go jogging and vice-versa.
- Make use of foot powder on a daily basis. It will keep your feet dry and free of unpleasant odor.
- Indulge in walks on a daily basis. The activity is not only good for your health, but also provides proper blood circulation to your feet.

Foot Care Don'ts

- Do not ignore even the slightest pain in your foot, as it might be the sign of a major ailment.
- Do not apply any lotion or cream between your toes, as it can lead to a skin infection.
- While trimming your toenails, make sure not to cut down the corner. This might lead to in-growth of toenails.
- Never ever make use of a razor on your calluses. It might lead to an infection later on.
- Do not cut out a corn with a pair of scissors. Rather, make use of proper corn caps, available with a pharmacist.



- Do not wear the same pair of shoes everyday. It is better to alternate between different pair of shoes.
- Never ever wear socks or stockings that are either too short or too tight. They will interfere with the circulation of blood to your feet.