

Advice

Footcare for Sportspeople from ConsultingFootPain

Having a go at footcare sounds like a good idea, so I've come up with some tips to help with your sports events, whether you play tennis or run, are professional or amateur, your focus should be preventing skin and nail problems interfering with your performance and enjoyment.. *After all, who doesn't want to optimise their performance?* Here's a bit about the toe – a common area on the foot to receive injury.

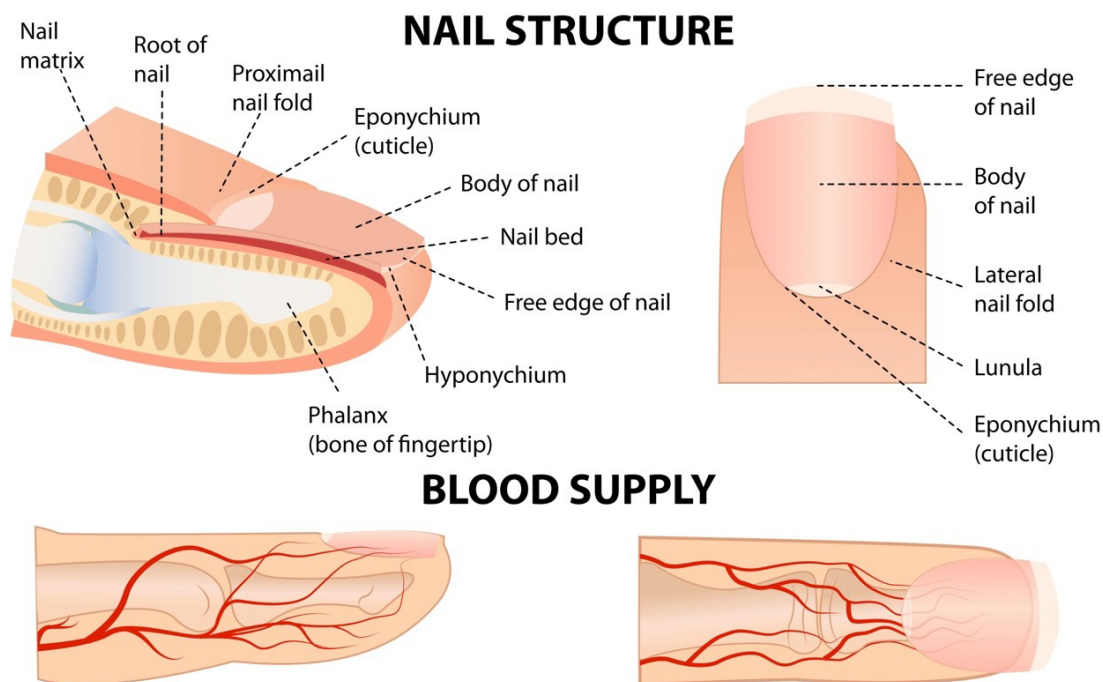
NAILS

Nails are derived from the same material as skin. Malignancy in the feet is fortunately rare, but watch out for dark stains under the nail plate where there has been no recent injury. Melanoma can occur and is a malignant condition and can spread through the body.

The bone may enlarge under a nail causing deformity. This will press against the toe box and wear out the lining.

If there is no nail to cut, and the skin looks unusual with a depression, have this checked for another type of skin cancer, although it is rare.

Read my articles on swellings in feet—'Bone & swelling big toe' & 'Cysts & swellings'. You will find more about foot bumps on feet and Cancer & the Foot. davidtollafielddauthor.com under consultingfootpain.



MANAGING NAIL TRAUMA

Prevention

Basic care - long nails will cause problems when the foot undergoes excessive movement. Keep the nail trimmed - avoid cutting too short, so you should see the free edge with a little white colour.

Checklist - Press down on each nail before the sports activity and make sure there is no pre-existing pain. Check the skin around the borders and squeeze to ensure there is no discomfort or skin infection, such as an ingrown toenail.

If the nail is thick, often arising around the little toe, take a file (one person use only) and reduce the thickness until the nail is as flat as possible. Avoid digging down the nail fold as this can lead to an infection.

FOOTWEAR FIT FOR PURPOSE

Check your footwear for your sport

Spending huge sums on your sport is one thing, but you need the proper footwear. First, consider foot stability, and then choose a shoe that is correct for your foot shape.

Shoes should be fitted carefully, and the materials used in the shoes are just as important. Some materials are better suited than others, including the design of soles. It is true that many branded companies spend thousands of pounds on developing sports footwear, but since everyone has a slightly different foot type, sizes vary between individuals.

Additionally, foot size can increase in volume during the day and decrease overnight. Sometimes we need two pairs of shoes to cope with those size changes. And of course, you need to allow moisture to dry out if you produce more sweat at the end of your activity.

Inside the shoe, there should be no rucked-up material, and the inner layers, such as the insock or insole, should be in good condition.



Replace damaged insocks. These are available online or at shoe or sports shops. Every shoe has an insock liner, but many shoes come with an insole, which is designed with foot posture and may have an arch and contoured heel cup.

Do not buy shoes with insoles designed to prevent pronation. This alone is a sticky subject. It may be that you need an inlay of some kind, but this should not be used as a sales pitch. Blisters can develop if the inlay has an arch height that you don't require.

The top material (upper) should be in good condition, not cracked across the top of the metatarsal break area (where the foot bends). The hind part of the foot, specifically the heel cap (see diagram), should not be broken down.

Also, look inside to ensure there is no wear holes.

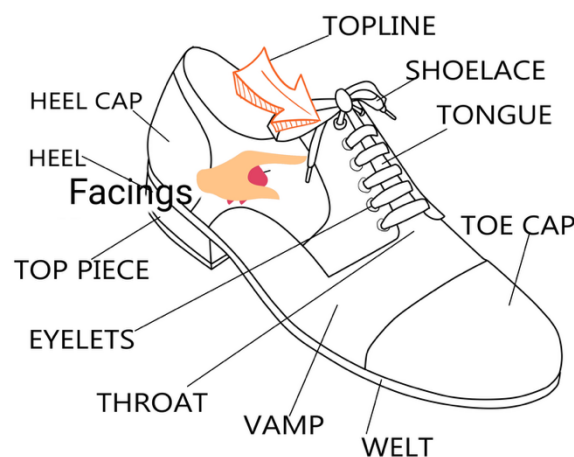
Make sure the laces are not thin - replace them with a new set before your competition. Your footwear remains the one part of your kit that contacts the ground. Like a car tyre, for performance, footwear needs to be in good condition. Replace faulty footwear.

The sole and wear - modern shoes are adhered or bonded as a unit. The material will withstand everyday wear, but runners and sportspeople will wear the soles down depending upon the activity. Central wear is acceptable as long as the tread is functional.

The heel, if worn down on the outside, if notable can cause your ankle to roll out more with time, and is not ideal for any sportsperson. *Think of horses and changing worn horse shoes.*

Replace the shoes and avoid attempting to repair them, as we are discussing high-performance capabilities here. If the heel is worn on the inside, then you have a foot problem that requires professional advice. If your heel wears down within weeks, again seek help. You may need a prescribed orthotic.

SHOE ANATOMY



Sizing your shoe - You will need to check that the foot does not piston inside the shoe. This happened to tennis star, Emma Raducanu.

Tie the laces and check to see if the foot moves back and forwards in the shoe. Remember, there is a difference between morning and afternoon, and the foot may swell. If there is a significant difference, have a second, larger pair of shoes available. Always buy shoes to fit the longer foot; this may be influenced by the longest toe, as it is often the second toe that is longer. A long toe will cause the nail and joints to impact once you start to exercise.

If the shoe pistons, fit a pad under the tongue of the sports shoe in felt material from a local pharmacy, or [Temu](#) carries a wide variety of pads that are shaped and can be stuck under the tongue.

Check that the laces, when tied, don't cause the two facings to overlap. If they overlap, this means the shoe is too big, and there is a chance of foot pistoning occurring. The tongue (marked with an arrow and finger) and pad need to be shaped to sit snugly inside the shoe. Peel the sticky cover off and push the pad firmly in place. The precut pads don't need altering, although felt will need shaping and trimming at the edges.

Just to be clear, an insock is a lining in a shoe and part of the construction. An insole is seen as an addition to the shoe but not necessary in all cases, but sports shoe now have insole as part of their design and selling pitch, so a build in arch raise is common.

The second line of defence is an insole. Of course, if the shoe has an insole, then it will make the shoe fit tighter, but you should not put multiple layers in without a good adhesive bond. It is better to select a shoe that requires no additional modifications. Use a thicker insole and remove the older thinner one if the shoe tightens.

SKIN & WOUND CARE

Use a handheld mirror under the foot to check for skin changes if you cannot see the undersurface of your feet. Protect areas prone to blisters with blister pads. Any area of skin that has a red appearance is open to blistering.

Protective dressings from pharmacies or the internet are thin and effective for short-term use. *Read my article on blisters.* Any blemish that is painful or causes concern should be checked by a podiatrist.

Keep the skin in good condition. There are plenty of creams on the market for regular skin. The skin remains stronger if hydrated and supple.

I'm not a fan of surgical spirit and prefer a light dusting of powder before a competition if needed.

Socks: Use moisture-wicking Fabrics. Natural fibres like cotton and wool are best. Cotton is breathable but retains moisture. Blending with synthetic fibres offers additional benefits. Merino wool is a good option because it regulates temperature and absorbs moisture without feeling wet, but it might be too hot for summer.

I hope this information sheet and guide are helpful. You can always drop a comment to me on my website: davidtollafielddauthor.com, as well as check out other articles under consultingfootpain.

