

Best Foot Forward

By [VaishaliP](#) August 31, 2014 in [Ask the Professional](#), [Health](#)

Vaishali Patel, a Podiatrist/Chiropractor at Body & Soul Medical Clinics and an expert in treating foot-related problems, gives advice on how to keep your family's feet healthy this summer.

by [Vaishali Patel](#) of [Body & Soul Medical Clinics](#)

What tips do you have for keeping feet healthy in the heat?

It is usually best to wear hosiery or socks to help absorb sweat and moisture; this also helps keep the foot somewhat protected from the dust and debris. Practice good foot hygiene by regularly cleaning between the toes; using some talcum powder can also help reduce moisture. At the same time, keeping the feet exfoliated and moisturized is important even in humid weather. Sometimes the pedicures and foot massages here can be a little overzealous and too much exfoliating may worsen fissures. It's good to be aware and don't be afraid to ask for less vigorous exfoliation. There are also products like tea tree oil, which offers great natural antibacterial properties for keeping fungus and other concerns at bay.



What are the most common foot problems during summer?

Wearing open shoes in the dusty, polluted environment of Shanghai seems to exacerbate fissures (small cracks in the skin) on the heel and even the toes. Toenail fungus is also a common problem. We tend to see verrucas (plantar warts on the feet) frequently in children, as they're easily spread around when kids are barefoot in common areas such as swimming pools and camps.

What treatments are available for common foot problems?

For fissures, we carefully cut the skin at an angle to get rid of the excessively dry skin and promote natural healing. There are a number of different treatments for toenail fungus. A professional can evaluate and monitor the fungus; it is often quite persistent and treatment depends a lot on the individual case. With both that and verrucas, you want to go to a practitioner who can offer a range of treatment options (especially important for children with sensitivities). Verrucas are often treated with cryotherapy (a cold/chemical burn) but there are other choices that don't involve such harsh chemicals.

Is there anything to do to avoid foot odor?

The best thing to avoid foot odor is practicing good hygiene by regularly washing the feet and making sure they are well dried, as well as changing socks or hosiery daily. Also, change your shoes regularly to give them a chance to air out. Talcum powder absorbs moisture and helps reduce odor.



Are Crocs good for kids' feet?

Real Crocs are made of an antibacterial type of material, which is good. However, keep in mind that while Crocs are generally good as "pool" shoes, they're not designed to provide the support needed for more rigorous activities like running or walking distances. Also, Crocs can be dangerous on escalators and they're even required to carry a warning about this issue.

My child tends to be clumsy, always "falling over her own feet." Is this something I should worry about?

If you are noticing your child seems excessively "clumsy," this might be a sign of issues with the feet or limbs (such as limb length discrepancy). You might also notice uneven wear on the shoes, which can also be a sign of incorrect foot rotation. Mention these issues to your medical practitioner for possible specialist evaluation.

How do I measure my child's feet for shoes?

When stores are equipped with a measuring device, measure your children's feet. The best way to do so is to have your kids wear socks and stand up. Then, when measuring their feet, add ½ inch to the longest toe (usually the first or second) and pick the matching shoe size. Then observe them walking in the shoe, and make sure their heels are not sliding up – in which case the shoes would be too big.



When visiting a store that's not equipped with measuring devices, have your kids try on a pair of shoes and make sure there's half an inch between the longest toe and the end of the shoe. By pressing with your index finger or thumb, you should be able to feel a "gap." Again, ask them to walk and make sure the heel is not sliding up.