

Stop Aching Feet



NURSES ARE on their feet all day. Proper shoes are essential to preventing potential health issues. “If the foot is not properly supported, you can get hip pain, knee pain, shoulder and neck pain. The whole foundation is thrown out of whack,” said Andrew Shapiro, DPM, president of the New York State Podiatric Medicine Association.

The American Podiatric Medicine Association identifies these foot ailments as common:

- **Blisters.** Caused by skin friction. To prevent, keep feet dry. Wash the area and apply antiseptic and bandage if blisters break.
- **Bunions.** These are misaligned joints in the big toes. They are hereditary, but narrow, tight shoes can exacerbate.
- **Corns and Calluses.** These are layers of dead skin cells caused by pressure and friction. Never cut corns or calluses.
- **Ingrown Nails.** These can be caused by shoe pressure, injury, fungal infections, genetics, or improper nail trimming.
- **Heel spurs** are growths of bone on the underside of the heel bone.

Another foot issue nurses are susceptible to is plantar fasciitis. The thick band of tissue across the bottom of the foot connects the heel bone and the toes. Plantar fasciitis results when the tissue is overstretched. Common symptoms include sharp or dull heel pain and stiffness.

According to the National Library of Medicine, if you meet these conditions, you have an increased chance of developing plantar fasciitis:

- Flat feet
- High arches
- Sudden weight gain
- Obesity
- Tight Achilles tendon

The National Library of Medicine offered these as relief measures.

- Acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Foot stretching exercises
- Supportive and well-cushioned shoes

That last recommendation is crucial for nurses. Shapiro shared this shoe-buying advice:

- Follow your instinct as to when it's time to get a new pair. When your feet start to hurt or feel unsupported, head to the store.
- Shop for shoes at the end of the day. Your feet will have swelled by then, and you'll get the most accurate fit.
- Athletic shoes are preferred for nurses.
- Clogs should have a strap across the

heel to hold the foot in place. Open-backed shoes place the foot in a mechanically unsound state.

- Forget the break-in period. The shoes should feel comfortable in the store.
- The shoes should be flexible at the ball of the foot, be constructed of breathable materials, and have plenty of room in the toe boxes.

To keep your feet in tip-top shape, Shapiro suggested:

- Buy multiple pairs and alternate them on different days. This will allow time for the shoe to dry out between uses and prevent athlete's foot and other fungal infections. It will also extend each pair.
- If wearing one pair every day, 3 to 6 months is a reasonable shoe lifespan. This will vary based on the quality of the shoe and the weight and activity level of the wearer.
- Add a cushioned insole, either custom-made or over the counter. This will help with being on your feet all day on hard, unforgiving hospital floors.

He reminds nurses, “Pain is not normal.” Whether its plantar fasciitis or more general foot discomfort, getting in well-fitting, proper shoes can help you stay on your feet. ■

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