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Foot Care the Chiropractic Way

Presented by: Total Health Systems

Your chiropractor understands the importance of healthy feet on the function of your lower extremity joints and tissues, as well as on your spine and posture and will work with you to maintain or restore your foot health. Foot care, the chiropractic way often involves more natural methods of treating foot and ankle ailments and it is a conservative, noninvasive approach that recognizes and respects your body's inherent integrity and design. Many chiropractors believe the foot, like the spine, can heal itself when proper structural alignment and tissue tone are restored.

Chiropractic foot care strategies encourage long-term foot, ankle, knee, hip and spine health which may address the underlying cause of many common foot and shin ailments. The chiropractic approach to foot care also seeks to prevent chronic musculoskeletal health problems, such as knee osteoarthritis, which may be associated with faulty footwear and excessive joint loading.[1,2] Restoring natural foot strength, flexibility, and function are core principles of chiropractic foot care.

Your chiropractor will examine your feet, perform any relevant tests and suggest in-office and at-home treatments that are both corrective and preventive.

Your chiropractor may also offer advice about the best footwear for you and how certain commercial foot products may support or inhibit your body's structural health. Foot care the chiropractic way is a safe, simple and cost-effective alternative to foot surgery, pharmaceutical drugs and other conventional approaches to help you regain your natural foot form and function.

Foot Form and Function

Your foot and ankle joints are the first links in a kinetic chain that begins at your toes and travels up through your body to your skull. A solid and stable platform, or foot, is essential for the proper functioning of this chain, for ensuring that your body segments work together in harmony to generate efficient and healthy movement. A structurally healthy human foot provides just such a platform, and it should be widest at the ends of the toes for optimal support.

Exercise of the Week

Exercise 1 – Range of Motion: Flexion

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate

(Consult your chiropractor before doing this or any other exercise.)

Start: Standing.

Exercise: Place hands on front of legs (for support, if necessary). Slide hands down legs as far as you can go, letting lower back muscles relax. Stop at point you feel resistance to the movement, but no pain. Hold for 15-30 seconds. Return to standing. Repeat 5-10X.

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A foot that possesses excellent toe splay and is widest at the ends of the toes may improve your balance, protect you from overpronation (i.e., excessive inward rolling of your foot and ankle) during weight-bearing activity and successfully absorb and disperse the forces experienced during gait, states Portland, Oregon-based sports podiatrist Dr. Ray McClanahan.[3]

Natural, Noninvasive Treatments

Your chiropractor is a musculoskeletal health expert who may use several natural, noninvasive methods to treat your foot problem. Chiropractic foot care strategies differ, though, depending on the nature of your injury or ailment and your chiropractor's treatment preferences. Common chiropractic foot care methods to address recent foot or ankle injuries include P.R.I.C.E. (**P**rotection, Rest, Ice, **C**ompression and **E**levation), foot manipulation, or adjusting, therapeutic taping procedures, soft tissue mobilization using the hands or tools, appropriate stretching and strengthening exercises and physical therapy modalities, such as ultrasound or cold laser.

Many chronic or long-standing foot complaints may benefit from these therapies, too, though long-term foot problems may best be treated by restoring normal, healthy foot anatomy and removing the factors, especially improper footwear, that cause foot and toe deformation and dysfunction over time. Some chiropractors may also recommend specific foot pads, shoe inserts, or custom footbeds to address your individual foot needs.

Important Footwear Considerations

The feet of people who have grown up in barefoot cultures or who have worn minimal footwear for all or most of their life such as in Africa, Asia and other parts of the world appear markedly different from the feet of shoe-wearing individuals.[4] These people, in many cases, have excellent toe splay, strong and sturdy foot arches and incredible foot dexterity. The widest part of the foot in these individuals is at the ends of the toes, not at the ball of the foot, as is common in shoe-wearing, people. According to a study in the *Journal of the National Association of Chiropodists,* unshod individuals may experience a significantly lower incidence of common foot problems, including hallux valgus, hallux rigidus, arthritis, and fungal infection.[5]

Wearing footwear that encourages proper foot anatomy and function is one of the most important considerations in treating numerous foot and ankle problems. Four design features commonly included in conventional footwear may contribute to foot and toe deformation or discomfort and should be considered when shopping for shoes or boots. These features include: tapering toe boxes, heel elevation, toe spring (i.e., the upward ramping that is built into the ends of many shoes) and rigid, inflexible soles.[6] Tapering toe boxes and heel elevation may be the most problematic shoe design features of all and you should consider searching for flat shoes with a toe box wide enough to accommodate natural, healthy toe splay.

Quote to Inspire

"Be sure you put your feet in the right place, then stand firm."

Abraham Lincoln

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