



By Dr. Tressa Jordan  
Special to Twin Tiers Health

## Winter Foot Care Tips

If you found yourself singing, "All I want for Christmas is two pain-free feet," you are not alone. According to an American Podiatric Medical Association survey, more than half of Americans have foot pain that affects their daily life from walking and exercising to long periods of standing.

As anyone who has had foot pain can attest, when one's feet hurt, the rest of the body hurts. Here are some tips to help with winter foot care and return your holiday cheer.

- Keep your feet dry. Many people slosh through snow and puddles quickly through the parking lots as they run errands or go to work then stay in those same damp shoes and socks throughout the day. While damp socks are uncomfortable in themselves, they also pose hazards. Cold, damp socks and shoes keep one's feet cold for longer periods of time and decrease blood flow to the toes. Damp socks can also cause the skin to break down and make it more likely for the area to get athlete's foot or ulcers. Not to mention that dark, damp environments are prime bacteria-growing areas and can cause stinky feet. To avoid many of these unfortunate scenarios, simply make sure if your socks and shoes get wet to dry your

feet and change into a dry pair of socks and shoes. Adding baby powder to your socks is also a great way to dry up extra moisture if you are planning on being active outside.

- Pick proper footwear. Shoes or boots should be comfortable with adequate support. High heels are a danger in the cold, icy winter and one slip can lead to a disastrous outcome. On the same facet of keeping your feet dry, one should pick footwear that is appropriate for the weather outside. Having good traction in the snow or ice can prevent falls and keep feet dry. Winter shoes and boots that are made of natural materials (leather, cotton, wool) keep feet warm and breathe better to keep down moisture compared to synthetic material. One should also make sure the shoe or boot has proper padding, arch support and fit. To help tell if a shoe or boot fits well, one should be able to wiggle their toes, but not the arch and heel inside the boot. Remember boots or shoes that don't fit properly can increase your chances of blisters, chaffing, corns and callouses and injuries to the foot and ankle. Moisturize your feet and legs. Once the

furnaces kick on in the fall, the static electricity lights up the night, but your feet don't need to get zapped by the dry air. Providing a good daily moisturizing lotion or ointment will help prevent dry cracked skin which can lead to unnecessary heel pain, itchy skin and infections. However, avoid putting moisturizer between the toes. The toe web spaces do a great job of keeping moisturized on their own and adding anything to this area can increase the chance of skin breakdown leading to a variety of infections, including athlete's foot.

Nail care is a must. During wintertime here in the Twin Tiers, our toes like to hide behind socks and slippers, but it is still important to provide our nails with constant care. Keeping nails trimmed prevents breaking and chipping of nails, ingrown nails and provides a good fit for our warm shoes and boots. Dry nails that are splitting can be treated with tea

tree oil that helps moisturize and contains nature elements to prevent the dreaded fungus.

- Inspect your feet daily. Doing a daily foot inspection is a must for diabetics or those with decreased circulation, and winter is no exception. The moist cold air outside combined by the dry static air inside can wreak havoc on your skin, along with decreased blood flow. Inspect your feet for any changes in color, open cracks in the skin, blisters, drainage or odor. Check your socks and shoes daily, too, for any drainage, moisture, pebbles or rough edges. If you notice any changes to your skin, let your doctor know.

I hope these tips help you to have a more pleasant winter experience.

If you have any questions regarding foot and ankle care, don't hesitate to contact Dr. Tressa Jordan at the Foot and Ankle Care at Olean Medical Group by calling (716) 376-2282.