

Foot Notes

SUMMER 2015

HEALTHY FEET FOR AN ACTIVE LIFE

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Have You Checked Your Feet for Skin Cancer?

You're vigilant about checking your face, scalp, limbs and torso for suspicious moles, but do you also check your feet? Skin cancer is on the rise in the U.S., with one of the most serious forms of skin cancer—melanoma—ranking as the most common foot malignancy. Melanomas on the foot are often misdiagnosed and more dangerous because they go undetected and untreated longer than those in easier-to-spot locations.

Melanomas can occur anywhere on the foot, including under a toenail. They most often appear as pigmented lesions. Similar to other skin cancers, excessive unprotected sun exposure, a family history of skin cancer, numerous moles on the body and having fair skin, blue eyes or red hair can put you at risk. Even people normally at low risk for skin cancer can develop melanomas on their feet.

If you notice any pigmented or unusual lesion on your foot, under a toenail or on the bottoms of your feet, make an appointment immediately with our office. To be safe, moles or lesions on the feet that change color and shape should be removed and biopsied. Left untreated, melanomas can have serious consequences.



The ABCDs of Melanoma Detection

A: Asymmetry. The shape of one half doesn't match the other.

B: Border. The edges are often ragged, notched, blurred or irregular, and the pigment may spread to the surrounding area.

C: Color. The color is uneven or varies from one area to another. Shades of black, brown and tan may be present. Areas of white, red, pink, gray or blue may be seen.

D: Diameter. Melanomas are usually larger than the eraser of a pencil (6 mm).



Tips to Avoid Storm Cleanup Foot Injuries

Summer storms and flooding can be horrendous at times, often leaving massive cleanup efforts from the devastation and damage left behind.

After a storm has passed, one of the first things residents want to do is clear away debris and return to their normal lives. What people don't always realize are the dangers still lying beneath the water and rubble that can cause serious injury to feet and ankles.

Our office suggests these simple tips to avoid cuts, puncture wounds, broken bones and other foot injuries during storm and flood cleanup:

- ▶ **Watch where you walk.** Debris and murky floodwaters can conceal sharp objects like nails and broken glass. Be careful standing on unstable surfaces and piles of debris that can throw you off balance, causing ankle sprains or fractures.
- ▶ **Wear appropriate shoe gear.** Sturdy work boots are preferred. Avoid going barefoot or wearing open-toed footwear, like sandals, to prevent injury and puncture wounds.
- ▶ **Take precautions when cutting down tree limbs.** Heavy tree limbs can fall with enough force to break bones in the feet and ankles.
- ▶ **Immediately treat cuts and puncture wounds.** To help prevent infections, including bone infections, wash cuts and puncture wounds with clean water, apply a topical antibiotic and cover with a clean bandage. Puncture wounds require medical treatment within 24 hours to avoid infection and other complications from embedded foreign objects. Pieces of skin, sock and shoe can be forced into the wound during a puncture, as can dirt and debris from the object itself. Make an appointment with our office for follow-up care, including a tetanus shot if necessary.

Safety is the number one priority during storm cleanup. Be cautious in your efforts and if you or a family member suffers an injury, make an appointment with our office so we can help.

Protect Your Kids' Bare Feet This Summer



Kids, summer and bare feet—can't have one without the others. While your kids may love to go barefoot during the summer, doing so may expose their feet to numerous potential injuries that can ruin the rest of the season for them.

What lies hidden in the grass, dirt or sand can definitely wreak havoc on bare feet. From nails, shards of glass, slivers of wood, pieces of seashell at the beach, thorns from trees and plants or sometimes discarded toothpicks, each can puncture the skin of the foot and cause serious injury. Even after the object is completely out of the foot, any dirt or bacteria pushed into the wound from the puncture can lead to an infection, painful scarring or even a cyst. Any puncture wounds should be treated promptly in our office within 24 hours.

Besides the hidden dangers, “everyday kid injuries” can also interrupt a summer break. Protect your kids' feet from traumatic injuries, such as bicycle injuries and lawn mower accidents, by making sure they wear sturdy shoes while riding a bike or when cutting the grass.

Don't take sunburn on the feet lightly. Protect your kids' feet from the sun's harmful rays by applying sunscreen to the tops and bottoms of their feet. Feet, like shoulders, burn faster than the rest of the body since they are more perpendicular to the sun's rays. Not only is sunburn of the feet painful, it can also cause skin cancers that often go unnoticed until they become very serious.

