

Getting a Leg up on Summertime Foot Care

BY PAMELA BRILL

After months of donning boots and sneakers, airing out your tired tootsies is a welcome relief. But before you decide to ditch your sturdy shoes in favor of flimsy flip flops – or no shoes at all – consider these helpful tips for happy feet.

STAY SAFE AT THE SALON. Before you slip out on your socks and indulge in your first pedicure of the season, be wary of any pre-existing limitations. “Always tell your pedicurist of any medical conditions you may have such as diabetes or poor circulation,” says Dr. Mary Ann Bilotti, a podiatrist with the Long Island Foot & Ankle Group and chief of podiatry at Long Island Jewish Valley Stream. “Putting your feet in a hot bath or whirlpool can be dangerous and cause severe problems.”

When visiting a nail salon, take note of your surroundings and be sure that the nail technician does not treat ingrown nails or cut callouses. “Check if the pedicure chair is pipeless and if each person uses an individual disposable liner for the basin,” says Dr. Douglas Livingston, a podiatrist with Livingston Foot Care in North Bellmore.

PUT THE KIBOSH ON KITTEN HEELS. Weddings and other summertime affairs call

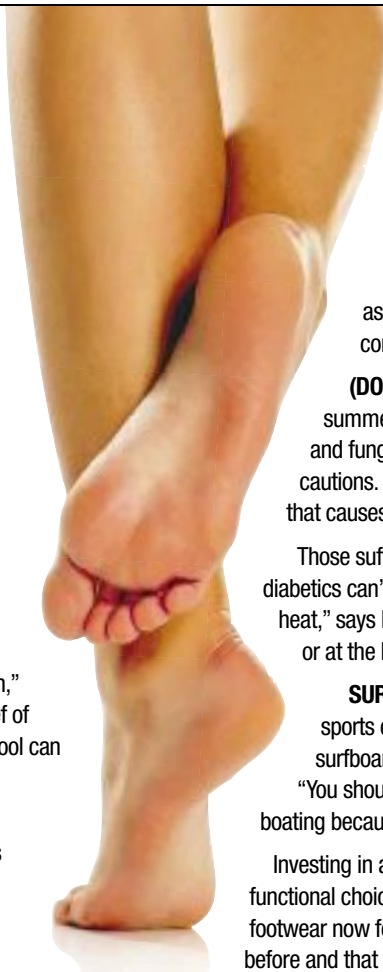


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for dressing up, but experts advise leaving those high heels at home. “Heels above two inches when worn for extended periods can cause back, knee and foot pain,” says Bilotti.

“High heeled, narrow-toed shoes can cause irritations and symptoms associated with bunions, hammertoes, corns and callouses, and can cause contracture of the Achilles tendon,” adds Livingston.

(DON'T GO) BAREFOOT IN THE PARK. Running through the grass is a summertime rite of passage, but don't go too far, sans shoes. “Bacteria and fungi live in those environments and can easily attach to bare feet,” he cautions. Parks and pool areas are also prime locations for picking up the virus that causes warts.

Those suffering from diabetes are also at risk when going barefoot. “Sometimes diabetics can't detect pain (from neuropathy) and they cannot detect sharp objects or heat,” says Bilotti. Wearing protective footwear is a must when poolside, at the park or at the beach.

SURF'S UP. With so many restrictions on summertime footwear, most water sports can relax the rules. Bilotti gives the green light for going barefoot while surfing or paddle-boarding, but draws the line when it comes to boating. “You should always wear some type of protective footwear or sneakers while boating because of hooks and other sharp objects,” she says.

Investing in a pair of reliable water shoes is a safe bet – and with more fashionable, functional choices on the market, it's easy to find something to fit your needs. “There is footwear now for water sports that are more supportable to the foot and leg than ever before and that allow for better traction and prevent cuts,” notes Livingston.

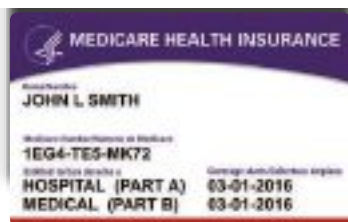
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