

As educators, you focus on your students. As a result of your dedication, your own needs are often neglected. This article explains the importance of maintaining healthy legs and feet. There are a number of things you can do to help reduce the symptoms of some conditions and help in the prevention of possible future problems regarding your legs and feet.

### Your Legs

In your workplace, many employees stand or sit for extended periods of time. The function of standing/sitting for long periods of time over the accumulation of years of work can lead to a variety of symptoms ranging from mild to severe. Symptoms may include: **Heaviness and Fatigue, Edema, Varicose Veins, Skin Changes** or even **Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)**. The following are tips that will assist you in maintaining healthy legs.

- **Avoid sitting or standing for long periods of time.** Our circulation improves with physical activity, so GET UP! Take a short walk, climb stairs, or make an effort to move around the office and at home. Avoid prolonged sitting or standing as this may increase leg pain and swelling.
- **After a long tiring day, especially during the summer, revitalize your legs with a cool shower or bath.** Avoid extended exposure to heat from sunbathing, hot baths, or the sauna as excessive heat will cause your veins to dilate and may induce swelling.
- **Elevate your legs.** To boost your body's natural circulation, elevate your legs while you are sitting on the sofa or lying in bed at home. At the office, keep a leg rest under your desk.
- **Work out. Regular exercise helps keep your body healthy.** Some sports are better for improving circulation, such as swimming, walking, biking and yoga.
- **Control your weight.** When you manage your weight through a healthy diet and regular exercise, you are more likely to have less leg symptoms and/or less swelling.
- **Wear graduated compression socks and stockings.** Quality compression socks and stockings improve venous circulation to prevent and treat venous problems.

Compression stockings are available in an assortment of products designed to fit your lifestyle. These products can help improve your circulation, increase your energy and aid in keeping your legs healthy. Your physician will prescribe the right level of compression for you and a Certified Compression Fitter will measure your legs and help you find the type of material best for you.

**Patients who benefit from graduated compression include:**

- People who stand or sit for long periods of time
- People who have been prescribed anticoagulants
- People who travel
- Women who are pregnant
- People who have had a Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)
- People who experience swelling in their legs and feet
- People with varicose and/or spider veins

### Your Feet

Your foot health can have a big impact on both your professional and personal life. Day to day tasks are certainly more difficult when you feel discomfort with every step you take, or you know that by 2 pm your feet will scream **"We have had enough."**

If you are experiencing foot pain, it is important to know the cause of the pain to determine how to best treat it. The best place to start is either with your family physician or a visit to a podiatrist. Both of these professionals can access, diagnose and prescribe a treatment. Depending on the condition, physicians often recommend patients see a pedorthist to get orthotics or orthopedic footwear. In other cases they may refer to a podiatrist to have them diagnose and prescribe the best treatment plan.

Some of the common conditions foot professionals can assist with include:

- Injuries
- Diabetes
- Plantar Fasciitis
- Heel Spurs
- Metatarsalgia
- Morton's Neuroma
- Arthritis
- Hammer Toes
- Leg Length Differences
- Calluses / Corns
- Bunions
- Ulcer Care
- Nail Care
- Ingrown toe nails
- Fungal conditions
- Warts
- And more

Treatments for the above conditions may include: orthotics, orthopedic footwear, footwear modifications, exercises, minor office procedures, foot care, etc. Pedorthists and Podiatrists are allied health professionals and work with your physician to ensure you receive the best possible care.

Your choice of footwear also plays a big role in your foot health. It is important to select your footwear carefully. When seeing a foot specialist like a pedorthist or podiatrist, they will be able to provide you with information regarding the footwear that will work best to meet your specific needs. The information below is a general guideline to follow when selecting footwear.

### Selecting Footwear

- **Wear footwear appropriate for the activity.** On occasion where dress shoes must be worn, limit excessive walking.
- **Lace-up shoes** provide more support than slip on shoes.
- **Fit for your largest foot** - Many people have one foot larger than the other.
- **Replace footwear as required** – Many people wear shoes long after they wear out. Factors such as activity, walking surfaces, and weight, will affect the life of your footwear.
- **Ensure the shape of the shoe matches the shape of your foot** – Make sure the widest part of your foot (the ball) fits comfortably into the widest part of the shoe.
- **Shoes should be as wide as your feet** and up to (3/8 – 1/2) inch longer. When shoes do not fit correctly, their function is compromised and flex points will not match your foot anatomy.
- **Shoe sizes are not standardized.** Sizes vary between all shoe brands and styles. A size 9 from one shoe manufacturer might fit like a size 8

from another. Don't rely on the size marked on the shoe.

- **The shape of the shoe should match the shape of your foot.**
- **Shop for shoes at the end of the day** – During the day feet often swell.
- **The arch area of the shoe should be strong and supportive,** it should never bend. You should not be able to compress the heel counter (back of the shoe) or easily twist the shoe.
- **Shop at shoe stores that offer a good selection** of sizes and widths.
- **Properly trained staff** will ensure a good fit.
- **Shoes with removable insoles** allow for full length orthotics should they be required.

If you have already taken a step forward in addressing your foot and leg health – Congratulations!

If you would like additional information, there is help available. Quite often the issue is finding the time. As educators, you know the value of information and we understand the challenges you face in finding the time to take care of your foot and leg health.

### Information Session:

Help is just a call away. As a team of certified health professionals (Podiatrist, Pedorthists, Bracing Specialist, Sigvaris and Bauerfeind Compression Fitters) we are pleased to offer schools in the Halifax Region a "Foot and Leg Health Education" session at your school. This is an information session only. Products will not be sold at these sessions. If you would like to schedule a session for your school please contact Lisa at Comfort Orthotics & Podiatry at the Sunnyside Mall in Bedford 902-835-7463 or [comfortorthotics@eastlink.ca](mailto:comfortorthotics@eastlink.ca) to arrange a date and time.

*If you are outside the Halifax area, we are happy to contact professionals in your area to arrange a similar service.*

