

Foot Care

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In this modern age of work and play—of all-day labor and all-night parties, no other portion of our anatomy (with the possible exception of our stomach) is so much abused as those faithful friends, our feet.

Did you ever consider the fact that your feet, weighing from two to four pounds each, support from forty to fifty times their own weight, and that under very difficult and unnatural conditions? What would happen to your head or chest if either were subjected to a weight equal in proportion to that borne by your feet, and that weight being raised and lowered at the rate of forty to eighty times per minute? Do you think they would long withstand the strain?

There is so much one may write on the "use and abuse" of the feet that it is difficult to know just where to begin and what specific subjects to discuss in a short article like this. Of about equal importance on this subject are the matters of foot-gear and posture; the former for such lesser ailments as corns, collouses, in-grown nails, etc., and the latter for the more serious complications involving the arches and ankles. Since about 95 per cent of all foot ailments are due to mis-fit shoes, we shall take up their consideration first.

One of the first essentials in correct shoes is a snug fit everywhere except where we usually get it—across the toes. Of equal importance with a correct width throughout is proper length, and by this term we mean a shoe that is a correct length for the foot,—from the back of the heel to the beginning of the toes, for that is the part of the foot to be considered in fitting shoes. Any standard-made shoe that will fit the foot will be long enough for the toes. Such a shoe may be longer than is necessary for short toes, but is it not better that the shoes be too long than too short? We'll let you answer that yourself, you who have had the experience of wearing shoes that were too short. Another important consideration is the shape of the shoe. The last should be somewhat the shape of the foot the shoe is to encase, because a correct fit cannot be had unless the shoe is of proper shape.

Proper height of the heel is another important point. The old theory that everyone should wear low-heeled shoes is, to say the least, erroneous. The height of the heel is determined by the arch. We cannot fit a square peg into a round hole, neither can we fit a high arch into a low-heeled shoe. Try it on yourself, you who have high arches. Put on a low-heeled shoe and feel the space between the in-sole of the shoe and the sole of your foot under the arch. Of course, high heels with otherwise mis-fitted shoes are out of the question.

Some reader will probably here ask: "How is it that the aboriginal races do not wear heels on their foot-gear and yet do not seem to be afflicted with arch troubles? The answer to the question is this: The aborigines have soft ground on which to walk, where their heels and toes sink into the ground and their feet are given support under the arches, but we modern city-dwellers do not have such conditions for our protection. During the evolutionary stage of human development nature provided our ancestors with feet that were adequate to the needs of their times, but civilization has given us wooden floors and concrete pavements on which to walk, and science, the father of civilization, must give us the protection which nature, in her orderly progress, is too slow in providing.

The shoe should have a comparatively narrow shank (the part of the sole under the instep) and should be a lace shoe with a wide lacing space for ordinary wear; and should have two or more straps at least if a pump is wanted for

dress. Be sure the shoe fits snugly everywhere back of the toes, and if then there is room in the forepart of the shoe so that the toes may be easily moved about and their ends do not press against the upper of the shoe, you may feel sure that you will enjoy some degree of comfort in wearing them.

Regarding the question of posture, it is almost unbelievable that not many years ago, and to some extent yet, our school children were taught to walk with their toes turned outward. In this enlightened age it is little short of imbecility to teach our boys and girls, who will in the near future be our men and women, to practice such an unnatural posture. Such a manner of walking brings a severe strain on the inner arch of the foot, with no muscular pull to counteract it, with the result that the ligaments of that part are strained and eventually become elongated, giving one the condition popularly known as "flat-foot."

The proper manner of walking, if one wishes to conserve the normal shape and strength of the feet, is to plant them with the toes pointing directly ahead and as near a straight line passing between the legs as the conformation of the individual will permit. The following simple test will prove this point to anyone's satisfaction.

While in your bare feet, place them in the position just mentioned, one about one and a half feet ahead of the other and both flat on the floor, then slowly propel yourself forward. Observe that as your body moves forward it also moves to the side until the center of gravity (weight) is directly over the foot that was in advance. Now while the body is moving forward and lateralward, also observe that your weight is being shifted more and more to the outer border of the foot until practically your entire weight is borne by that part of the foot, there being very little strain on the inner arch or the great toe, and that the fifth (little) toe begins to bend first. This bending of the toes will progress as the body moves forward and the next toe, and the next, and so on, will bend, until the other foot leaves the floor, when the body will begin to swing to the other side and the great toe will not begin to bend until you are about to plant the other foot on the floor.

This is a slow-motion picture of what takes place in normal walking, and it places a minimum strain upon the inner arch. The outer arch, being short and low, and supported by a fat pad and other soft tissues placed directly beneath it, is well fitted to support the weight of the body without injury.

That much discussed (and "cussed") acrobatic performance which was recently the craze on the ball-room floor and the stage and known by the name of the "Charleston" is really a wonderful form of exercise for those afflicted with weak inner arches, because it compels the performers to indulge in a practice which otherwise would not be done—turning the toes in under muscular exercise. This practice should not be carried to excess, however, since the foot may become overstrained and a train of unpleasant symptoms follow in its wake.

The position of one's legs and feet while sitting is very important also in determining the condition of one's feet. The practice of sitting with one leg crossed over the other at the knee is detrimental to strong, healthy feet. The proper nutrition of all tissues of the body is dependent on proper blood and nerve supply to the parts. The principal blood vessels and nerves to the lower legs and the feet pass down behind the knees, and crossing the legs as mentioned above causes such pressure on these parts that they are hindered in carrying their proper supply to the parts below, just as pressure on a hose will prevent a full supply of water passing to the parts beyond. Most of us have experienced this in having our feet "go to sleep" after sitting for some time with our legs crossed at the knees.

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