

Healthy feet help older adults stay active for health and wealth

In these uncertain economic times, adults 50 and older (especially retirees) are mindful of the impact of spiraling costs—particularly the ever-increasing costs of healthcare. Regular physical activity preserves health and prevents disease in older adults, reducing healthcare costs. However, many individuals don't realize how much the state of their feet is tied to their ability to become or stay active. The International Council on Active Aging (ICAA), the Institute for Preventive Foot Health (IPFH) and THOR·LO, Inc., are working to educate older adults about foot health through the Footcare website at [www.icaa.cc/footcare.htm](http://www.icaa.cc/footcare.htm). Sponsored by IPFH and Thor·Lo, this site provides resources on both preventive and therapeutic foot health.

A physically active lifestyle reduces the risk for and helps in managing chronic diseases; lessens the risk of falls and related injuries; and prevents or lessens physical function limitations, according to 2007 recommendations by the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Heart Association. Yet, with only a few exceptions, aerobic exercise is done on our feet. Even for healthy people, 30 minutes of physical activity a day, five days a week, is virtually impossible without healthy feet. That's why foot health is a cornerstone of a healthy life.

So, how do older adults keep their feet healthy? The best way is to take a preventive approach by following the five principles of foot health supplied by IPFH and THOR·LO, in conjunction with ICAA:

Principle 1: Practice proper hygiene. It is important to keep the feet clean by washing and drying them daily, and by making sure that footwear is clean and is changed at least daily.

Principle 2: Perform regular visual inspections of the feet and pay attention to minor issues. Pain is not normal. Don't let small issues escalate into major issues. If pain occurs and persists for more than a day or two, and if any sores or red spots persist or don't heal within several days, see a doctor.

Principle 3: Cut and trim nails properly. Toenails should be cut straight across and any sharp edges lightly refined with a clean file or emery board. Serious cases of ingrown toenails should be treated by a physician or podiatrist. People who have trouble reaching their feet should not try to cut or trim toenails themselves, but should get assistance or go to a podiatrist or other foot care specialist. If toenails are bruised or discolored, it can be a sign of disease or trauma to the toe. If discoloration persists, a physician should be consulted.

Principle 4: People with diabetes and diabetic foot complications should take special precautions. These include regular foot examinations by a physician or podiatrist and daily visual self-inspections (especially if neuropathy is present). People with diabetic foot issues should never soak their feet in hot water, should not cut their own toenails (this should be done by a podiatrist or foot care nurse), and should not go barefooted.

Principle 5: Purchase a well-designed integrated footwear solution that includes an engineered padded sock product, an insert or orthotic as needed, and a well-designed pair of shoes, all properly fitted as an integrated system of protection. This integrated system will help ensure the ability to walk, run, work and play in more comfort, with the assurance that feet are well protected.

More information on preventive and therapeutic foot health is available free online at [www.icaa.cc/footcare.htm](http://www.icaa.cc/footcare.htm).

About the Institute for Preventive Foot Health

Website: [www.ipfh.org](http://www.ipfh.org)

The Institute for Preventive Foot Health (IPFH) promotes awareness of, and the need for, preventive foot health as a key to long-term quality of human life. It also promotes research and education dedicated to preventive foot health practices, products and procedures that contribute to the general well-being of the human foot.

About THOR·LO

[www.thorlo.com](http://www.thorlo.com)

THOR·LO has pioneered Preventive·Foot·Health through innovative Thorlos® activity-specific sock product designs since 1980. Thorlos are the only sock products with peer-reviewed, published research to support the claims and benefits of protection and comfort for aging, as well as for younger, feet. THOR·LO is the founding sponsor of the IPFH. For more information, please visit the Thorlos website at [www.thorlo.com](http://www.thorlo.com).

About the International Council on Active Aging (ICAA)

Website: [www.icaa.cc](http://www.icaa.cc)

ICAA is the world's largest membership association dedicated to changing the way we age by uniting and working with professionals in the retirement, assisted living, recreation, fitness, rehabilitation and wellness fields. The council connects a community of like-minded professionals who share the goals of changing society's perceptions of aging and improving the quality of life for Baby Boomers and older adults within the six dimensions of wellness (emotional, vocational, physical, spiritual, intellectual, social).

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