

## In This Issue

[Flip Flops & Foot Health](#)
[Summer Barefoot Safety](#)
[Diabetes & Protecting Your Feet from Heat](#)
[Help for Heel Pain](#)

## Don't Forsake Foot Health for Fashion with Flip Flops

Flip flop sandals and summertime seem to go hand in hand. But while these types of sandals are fun and fashionable to wear, they should not be a mainstay of your summer footwear.

Since flip flops have no arch support or stability, wearing them too often can cause abnormal stress on the plantar fascia (the band of tissue that extends from the heel to the base of the toes). The resulting condition, known as plantar fasciitis, usually causes pain in the heel immediately upon rising in the morning or after periods of inactivity during the day. This pain can persist and take a long time to subside.

To avoid developing plantar fasciitis this summer, wear supportive footwear that provides sufficient shock absorption. However, if you insist on wearing flip flops, wear them sparingly!

**If you are experiencing summertime foot or ankle pain, visit [FootHealthFacts.org](http://FootHealthFacts.org) to find a foot and ankle surgeon near you to find out what is ailing you.**



## Tips for a Safer Barefoot Summer



Millions of Americans will go barefoot this summer, and thousands will suffer injuries, such as cuts and puncture wounds. Some will develop serious infections that may require surgery.

The best way to protect feet and toes from injury is to wear shoes. But if your summer just would not be the same without the sand between your toes or walking in your backyard barefoot, you can make it a safer season by following these tips.

**TIP:** See a foot and ankle surgeon within 24 hours for a puncture wound.

**WHY:** These injuries can embed unsterile foreign objects deep inside the foot. A puncture wound must be cleaned properly and monitored throughout the healing process. This will help avoid complications, such as tissue and bone infections or damage to tendons and muscles in the foot. Foot and ankle surgeons are trained to properly care for these injuries.

**TIP:** Make sure you have been vaccinated against tetanus. Experts recommend that teens and adults get a booster shot every 10 years.

**WHY:** Cuts and puncture wounds from sharp objects can lead to infections and illnesses, such as tetanus.

**TIP:** Apply sunscreen to the tops and bottoms of your feet.

**WHY:** Feet get sunburn too, and sun exposure can lead to rare but deadly skin cancers on the feet.

**TIP:** Inspect your feet and your children's feet regularly for skin problems, such as warts, calluses, ingrown toenails and suspicious moles, spots or freckles.

**WHY:** The earlier a skin condition is detected, the easier it is to treat.

**TIP:** Wear shoes around swimming pools, locker rooms and beaches.

**WHY:** To avoid cuts and abrasions from rough anti-slip surfaces and sharp objects hidden beneath sandy beaches and to prevent contact with bacteria and viruses that can cause athlete's foot, plantar warts and other problems.

**TIP:** Use common sense.

**WHY:** Every year, people lose toes while mowing the lawn barefoot. Others suffer serious burns from accidentally stepping on stray campfire coals or fireworks. Murky rivers, lakes and ponds can conceal sharp objects underwater.

**For more summer footcare tips to help keep your feet safe, visit [FootHealthFacts.org](http://FootHealthFacts.org).**

# Living with Diabetes? Protect Your Feet from Summer Heat



If you are living with diabetes, hot and humid summer weather can wreak havoc on your feet. Exposure to extreme heat can lead to:

## Swelling

Swollen feet can make your shoes fit tighter and may exert blister-causing pressure on your toes and heels. Wear support stockings to reduce swelling and to avoid complications, such as poor circulation and further impaired nerve function.

## Dryness & Cracking

Any type of skin break on your feet can become infected and ulcerate if it is not noticed right away. If you wear sandals often during the summer, inspect your feet daily for any cuts, cracks or signs of infection and try to wear regular shoes a few days a week to limit your exposure.

## Puncture Wounds, Burns & Blisters

Even just a few minutes of walking barefoot on a hot driveway or sidewalk can badly burn the soles of your feet due to impaired nerve sensation from the disease. Always wear shoes outdoors to protect them from injury.

**Vigilant footcare year-round is a must if you are living with diabetes. Schedule regular foot exams with your foot and ankle surgeon to help keep your feet healthy all year long. To find a foot and ankle surgeon near you, use the “Find an ACFAS Physician” search tool on [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org).**

## Help for Heel Pain

While heel pain may occur for many reasons, foot and ankle surgeons categorize heel pain into four major causes: plantar fasciitis, Achilles tendonitis, bursitis and nerve pain. Diagnosing the specific issue depends on the exact location of the pain and how the pain affects the mechanical movement of the leg.

The most common cause of heel pain is plantar fasciitis, which is an inflammation of the band of tissue (the plantar fascia) that extends from the heel to the toes. The fascia becomes irritated and then inflamed, resulting in heel pain or pain in the arch of the foot. Plantar fasciitis is typically first treated with nonsurgical strategies, such as stretching exercises; rest; shoe pads and footwear modifications; orthotic devices; night splints and injection therapy. While most respond well to conservative treatments, some require surgery to correct the problem.

Achilles tendonitis, or inflammation of the Achilles tendon, can also cause heel pain. This overuse condition often occurs in athletes who play high-impact sports, such as basketball or tennis. They often have a sudden increase of repetitive activity involving the Achilles tendon, which puts too much stress on the tendon too quickly, leading to microinjuries of the tendon. To treat Achilles tendonitis, the foot is immobilized with a walking boot or cast, and physical therapy, orthotics and ice are also used to help repair the tendon. If the tendon is severely damaged or if nonsurgical treatments do not work, surgery may be necessary.

Another cause of heel pain commonly seen is bursitis, where the fat pad of the heel exhibits redness and swelling from



inflammation of the small fluid-filled sac inside the heel, called the bursa. The bursa, which protects the heel from friction, can become inflamed from repetitive motion or irritation from shoes. In the case of bursitis, the heel and the toes are most often affected. Treatment may include resting the foot, ice and anti-inflammatory drug therapy, padding and corticosteroid injections to reduce inflammation and relieve pain. Surgery may be necessary if conservative methods do not provide relief.

Finally, a somewhat less common cause of heel pain is nerve pain. When the nerves are involved, it feels more like a burning or electrical pain shooting or radiating down the foot from the heel, typically toward the toes. Medications may help with nerve pain, but nerve decompression surgery is often needed to help release the nerve causing the pain.

**Whatever your heel pain, visit your local foot and ankle surgeon for a proper diagnosis. To find a foot and ankle surgeon near you, visit [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org).**

