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Keep Your Young Athlete's Feet Safe

Sports seasons are ramping up for the fall and for young athletes this comes with an increase in foot and ankle injuries. Football, soccer, field hockey, and cheerleading are sports most likely to lead to sprains, broken bones, and other issues. Here are six tips to keep your child in the game this fall:

- 1. Always treat foot and ankle injuries immediately.** What seems like a sprain isn't always a sprain. Aside from ligament injuries, your athlete might have injured bones or cartilage without knowing it. Make an appointment with our office for proper treatment if you think your child has a foot or ankle injury. Failure to treat injuries properly and promptly can lead to long-term instability or arthritis later in life.
- 2. Have old sprains checked before the season starts.** Our foot and ankle surgeons can tell whether a previous injury might be vulnerable to sprains and when an old injury may benefit from wearing a brace or other support during the season.
- 3. Each sport requires a different sport-specific type of shoe.** Football and baseball cleats are not interchangeable, so be sure you're getting the right shoes for your child's chosen sport.
- 4. Start each sports season with new, properly fitted shoes.** Old shoes wear down over time and become uneven on the bottom, especially for



athletes during a busy season. When a shoe cannot lie flat, the ankle will tilt, increasing the risk of sprains and strains.

5. Walk the field before any practices or games. Check for dips, divots or holes as most sports-related ankle sprains are caused by running and jumping on uneven surfaces. Our foot and ankle surgeons recommend checking the field for spots that could trip up a player's foot, especially for nonprofessional settings like parks. If you notice any irregularities, alert coaching officials.

6. Always encourage athletes to stretch and warm up before practice or games. Calf stretches and light jogging help warm up ligaments, muscles, tendons and blood vessels reducing the risk for foot and ankle injuries.

As this sports season starts, contact a foot and ankle surgeon to have your child's feet, ankles and athletic shoes examined. [Visit FootHealthFacts.org](http://FootHealthFacts.org) to find a doctor near you.

Switch from Sandals to Shoes Safely



As you transition out of summer sandals and bare feet and into shoes and socks for the fall, keep in mind that this small change can cause big foot problems.

Ingrown Toenails

Wearing enclosed or improperly fitting shoes can lead to ingrown toenails. Trim your toenails straight across and wear shoes that are not tight in the toe box.

Irritated Bunions, Bone Spurs & Hammertoes

Constant rubbing on your feet from shoes can irritate any existing hammertoes, bunions, or bone spurs. Wear socks and properly fitting shoes and maybe even consider having your shoe stretched in the areas of irritation to provide some relief.

Neuroma Flare-Ups

Tight-fitting, close-toed shoes can trigger neuromas or nerve pain. Make sure your shoes have enough room for your toes, so they aren't squeezed or irritated.

Toenail Fungus

Fungus thrives in dark, moist, and warm environments, like your shoes. To prevent fungal growth, disinfect your shoes and wear different pairs to allow them to air out. Also remove any leftover nail polish from your toes. Nail polish seals the nail and traps moisture, which can create a breeding ground for fungus.

If you run into any of these issues when making the switch to fall shoes, you should contact a foot and ankle surgeon for proper examination and treatment options. If you don't have one, visit FootHealthFacts.org to find one near you.

Protect Your Feet During Fall Yardwork

As you tackle your fall yardwork, make sure to follow these tips to keep your feet and ankles injury free as you prepare your yard for the winter ahead.

Wear the right shoes. Even if the weather is mild, don't wear sandals. Instead, wear sturdy leather shoes with support to protect your feet from sharp objects, including the blades from power equipment. Keep children out of the yard and away from leaf blowers, power lawnmowers and chainsaws. These should never be left out where kids are playing, or other inexperienced users have access.

Avoid working on wet surfaces. You could slip and injure your feet or ankle when carrying heavy loads across wet grass or leaves.

Stretch and warm up before starting. Some yardwork can be just as strenuous as a workout at the gym. Warm up and stretch prior to any yard tasks to avoid stressing the muscles and tendons in your feet, ankles, and calves.



If you experience a foot or ankle injury while working around the yard this fall, seek emergency care if necessary and then follow up with a foot and ankle surgeon in your area. Need one? Visit [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org) to find one close to home.

Pick the Right Back-to-School Shoes



It is a new school year which means new back-to-school outfits and new shoes. Here are some things to keep in mind to pick out the best pair to keep kids' feet and ankles healthy all year.

Fit: Kids' feet can grow up to two sizes in six months, so it's important to account for growth when buying new shoes. Shoes shouldn't be too big as oversized shoes cause the foot to slide forward putting pressure on the toes. Perfect fitting shoes should allow about a finger's width from the end of the shoe to the tip of the big toe. Shoes that are too tight can cause blisters, corns or calluses on the toes, blisters on the heels, or ingrown toenails and can become infected if left untreated.

Wear and Tear: Shoes lose their shock absorption over time, so before letting your child wear their favorite pair, check them for proper cushioning and arch support. The same should be done with new shoes to make sure they're properly padded and supportive. The toe box

should flex easily and but the shoe shouldn't bend in the middle of the sole. Worn-out shoes increase the risk for heel pain, Achilles tendonitis and even ankle sprain or fractures due to the shoe being unstable. Replace any shoes with tears or wear around the edges of the sole.

Shoes for Flat Feet: Kids with flat feet need shoes with a wider toe box, maximum arch support, and shock absorption. The best shoes for flat feet are lace-up shoes with enough depth for an orthotic insert if needed.

If you notice signs of ill-fitting shoes or have any questions on proper footwear for your child, schedule an appointment with a foot and ankle surgeon as soon as possible. [Visit FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org) to find a doctor near you.