

## Help your feet feel younger and beautiful in 2016

We all start out with a clean slate on New Year's Eve. It's a time when most of us make a resolution to stop doing something that is making us unhealthy or unhappy; and to go in another direction for something new that will make us improve our quality of life. Time is not slowing down and it is taking a toll on our feet. I encourage all of you to pay more attention to your feet this New Year and to take action for improvement. Here are some health tips that will help your feet feel younger and beautiful in 2016!

### Tip 1: Wear Proper Footwear and be Size Smart!

Choose proper footwear for all occasions this year and be size smart. Pitch the old sneakers or athletic shoes that have been lying around in your closet or gym locker. Ask your podiatrist for some tips to select a shoe that is designed for the fitness activity and for your foot type.

Whenever possible, leave the stilettos in your closet. At least try to wear them less or scale down the heel height. Try to wear them on alternate days or slip into a pair of foot friendly flats when you get to work. There is nothing beautiful about painful feet and shoe wear that may lead to ankle sprains, bunions, hammertoes, plantar fasciitis, ingrown toenails, neuromas, and surgery.

Properly fitted shoes will help prevent corns, calluses, blisters, chafing, and foot or ankle injuries. Make a healthier choice of shoes this year. Foot-friendly shoes will help your feet; and your body will appreciate this.

### Tip 2: Don't Ignore Heel Pain!

The heel bone (calcaneus) is the largest bone in the foot that is subjected to the weight bearing load when walking. Heel pain is not something to ignore. It's a signal that there is something that needs to be checked by your podiatrist.

Although the most common form of heel pain is [plantar fasciitis](#), it may be caused by arthritis, a stress fracture, a heel spur, an irritation of the nerves, or problems in the arch. Once your podiatrist diagnoses the cause, the proper treatment can be selected.

In most cases, heel pain may be resolved with conservative treatment like non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications, different footwear that provides better support, stretching exercises, cold therapy, and rest. Other treatments may include corticosteroid injections, orthotic devices, removable walking casts, night splints, padding and strapping, and physical therapy. Laser therapy is also becoming an effective treatment for this problem. Surgery may be done in extreme cases to relieve the pain.

### Tip 3: Stop Bunion Discomfort and Pain!

If you are experiencing severe pain and discomfort because of a [bunion](#) that is interfering with your daily activities, it's time to explore your surgical options. If your anxiety has caused you to avoid surgery, you may be doing yourself more harm than good. An altered gait (walking) pattern can contribute to other mechanical problems in your feet and put unwanted stress on your ankles, knees, hips, and spine.

Remember, the goals of bunion surgery are three-fold; to relieve pain, to remove the bunion and keep it from returning, and to correct the alignment and mechanics of your foot. In most cases, surgery also improves the appearance of the foot. Talk with your foot and ankle surgeon about the various surgical options available.

### Tip 4: Don't Let Hammertoes Cramp your Style!

If you are you are tired of muddling through life with severe pain caused by [hammertoes](#) and forced to stop doing physical activities you once loved, it might be time for hammertoe correction.

There is no single surgical procedure that is best for everyone because each patient is different; however, your foot and ankle surgeon will be able to tell you the best options after making a thorough assessment of the underlying causes.

### Tip 5: Support your Feet with Custom Orthotics!

Custom [orthotics](#) are made from cast impressions of your feet and inserted into your shoes. Orthotics is designed to properly provide support for your arches and to distribute your weight bearing loads more uniformly. They are especially helpful for people with foot deformities, athletes, pregnant moms, and seniors who are experiencing greater changes in their feet.

A wide range of orthotics is available for various activities and shoe types, and for children and adults. Orthotics is not a permanent correction for a mechanical foot deformity but it can help slow down the progression of a deformity and need for surgery. New orthotics is generally needed every two years and should be checked for wear and tear.

### Tip 6: Start Moving but Start Smart!

Physical activity contributes to your health and can provide benefits to your feet. Select activities that you enjoy and get your feet moving. Don't rush into fitness. Start smart to avoid injuries like shin splints and plantar fasciitis (heel pain). A steady, gradual program is more beneficial in the long run than an intense program that puts undue stress on your feet. Avoid running on uneven surfaces and terrain; and incorporate cross training into your fitness program to reduce the stress on your feet.

Exercising your feet and ankles is also important to keep them strong and flexible. Talk with your podiatrist about easy exercises that can be done in your home. Strong feet will also have a positive effect on reducing pain in your back, hips, and knees.

### Tip 7: Say Goodbye to Ugly Toenails!

If you are tired of having to deal with the embarrassment of toenail irregularities cause by fungus, winter is the perfect time for laser treatment. By the time summer arrives, you should be able to wear open-toe shoes or sandals again with full confidence. Lasers are the state of the art treatment for toenail fungus and can restore the natural beauty of your nails. Treatments are quick, relatively pain free, affordable, and effective. Antifungal products and shoe sanitizers that kill fungus and bacteria are also used in conjunction with laser treatments.

New innovative nail restoration systems are now available to treat other toenail irregularities or deformities (i.e., spoon shaped, curved, grooved lines, ridging, thick, or splitting). End the embarrassment of ugly toenails and restore their natural beauty within minutes. Treatments are medically safe and affordable.

Your feet deserve the very best in 2016! If you are interested in seeking podiatrists with advanced foot and ankle surgical training and state of the art practices, contact the Foot & Ankle Center of Illinois at (217)787-2700. The Foot & Ankle Center of Illinois has locations in Springfield, Decatur, and Carlinville. Also, visit [myfootandanklecenter.com](http://myfootandanklecenter.com) for more information about the Genesis Plus laser treatment, [MLS Pain Therapy Laser](#), and [Keryflex Nail Restoration System](#).

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