

Flip-Flops Are for Politics, Not Your Feet

The arrival of summer weather is accompanied by the emergence of flip-flops. Flip-flops may be convenient, freeing, and sometimes even stylish-looking, but with extended use are harmful to feet and ankles. Especially bad, but commonly worn, are flip-flops sporting thin, totally flat, rubber soles; flimsy straps; and cheap plastic toe posts.

Flip-flops offer minimal support for arches, which can lead to arch discomfort and plantar fasciitis, painful inflammation of the thick band of tissue that extends from the heel to the ball of the foot.

The absence of shock absorption and heel cushioning means feet are under constant duress. The lack of stability makes ankles more prone to sprains.

Feet are also susceptible to cuts and scrapes, stubbed toes, broken toes, torn nail beds, and blisters. Puncture wounds are an enhanced threat and can be deceptive. Damage sometimes appears minimal, but wounds can run deep and trigger infection without proper treatment.

Toes have to continually grip the flip-flops to keep them on one's feet, which can result in tendonitis. A person's walking pattern typically changes, too, which can potentially send a ripple effect of discomfort to the ankles, knees, hips, and back. In addition, bunions can be aggravated, and conditions may be ripened for hammertoes.

Wearing flip-flops for short stretches, such as crossing hot surfaces or walking poolside or through a locker room to minimize contact with fungi (e.g., athlete's foot), can be beneficial, but never wear them for extended periods of time.

If you experience lingering foot or ankle pain, contact our office. If you insist on wearing flip-flops, we can offer suggestions. Some flip-flops are less harmful than others.



Meet Dr. Michael B. DeBrule

Dr. Michael B. DeBrule serves patients at our clinic in Richfield. His clinical interests include custom foot orthotics, sports medicine, gait analysis, diabetic and senior foot care.

Dr. DeBrule graduated in 2000 from the Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine. He completed residency training in podiatric medicine and surgery through Cook County Hospital in Chicago and the Southern Arizona Department of Veterans Medical Center in Tucson. Research conducted by Dr. DeBrule has been published in *Podiatry Today*, *the Journal of Foot and Ankle Surgery*, and *the Journal of the American Podiatric Medical Association*. He is also board-certified in wound care.

Outside of his passion for treating patients, Dr. DeBrule enjoys spending time with his family, running, and coaching hockey and baseball.



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Take on These Tips for Preventing Shin Splints

The term “shin splints” just has something to it that sounds wholly unpleasant, and odds are pretty good you can get a runner to shudder just by saying it.

Shin splints, in general, refer to pain felt along the front of the lower leg, or your “shin bone.” It tends to be more common in runners and other participants in moderate to heavy activity—especially sports with a lot of starting and stopping, such as tennis and basketball. The pain often comes as a dull ache and will often develop or worsen while you’re active.

Activity can place a lot of force on the shins, and sometimes this results in injuries such as stress fractures and muscle strains. Keeping this cause in mind is one of the best first steps you can take toward preventing the problem from occurring.

Here are some general shin splint prevention tips:

- **Give your body recovery time.** Going hard on the track and court all day or not taking enough rest days in your routine can overload your body. Resting or cross-training gives your shins (and the rest of you) an opportunity to rebuild from stress damage and come back stronger than before.
- **Warm up and stretch properly.** Prolonged stress can hurt your shins, but so can the shock of sudden activity when your body isn’t ready for it. Light jogging and jumping exercises are a great warm-up, as well as any stretches that focus on the feet, ankles, Achilles, and calves.
- **Opt for softer surfaces.** If you can, stay off concrete and stick to dirt, clay, or softer gym surfaces. If you’re a street runner, consider hitting the treadmill once or twice per week instead to give your body a bit of a break.

We can provide additional help for shin splint treatment and prevention, including best choices for footwear and what specific exercises would be optimal for you. Just ask!

Mark Your Calendars

- June 4** Doughnut Day: “Doughnuts. Is there anything they can’t do?” — Homer Simpson
- June 7** Chocolate Ice Cream Day: Chocolate and ice cream. The original dream team!
- June 10** Ballpoint Pen Day: First sold in U.S. at Gimbels (New York) on Oct. 29, 1945 (\$12.50!).
- June 12** Family Health & Fitness Day: Celebrate with a family walk or hike.
- June 13** Weed Your Garden Day: Dandelions are highly flavorful and nutritious weeds.
- June 14** 20th Men’s Health Week: The goal is to heighten the awareness of preventable health problems and early detection of diseases among men and boys.
- June 20** HAPPY FATHER’S DAY! We want to honor all that amazing fathers out there!





Encouraging Foot Health in Your Children

Want a hot tip for life? It's never too early to make good choices!

Of course, if you're a parent, good choices are something you will often find yourself having to nudge your kids toward. They are not always in the market for determining what will be best for them or their futures.

Learning a few good habits early on can help save them from problems later on. Here are a few to encourage:

- **Your child's shoes are theirs alone.** Sharing shoes can lead to nasty surprises such as warts, fungal toenails, and athlete's foot. Teach your child to only wear their shoes, and never let someone else use theirs.
- **Warm-up before high activity.** Warming up with stretches and light jogging before sports and running is a good way for everyone to help avoid overuse injuries such as Achilles tendinitis. Making warmups a habit will be beneficial in the future (and any sports coaches your child may have will likely love their discipline, too!).
- **Wash well.** Daily foot hygiene is important! The feet should be washed with warm water and soap as part of a routine, and that includes between the toes. Just letting soapy water run down over the feet does not count (we're looking at you too, adults).
- **Be open about foot or ankle problems.** A common problem with children is that something may hurt, but they are afraid to talk about it due to fear of missing out on activities or fear of enduring a treatment that feels even worse. Always be open, honest, and compassionate with your children about potential treatments and problems, and they will be more open to talking with you about them.

Never hesitate to ask us if you have any questions about your child's foot or ankle care. We will be happy to help!

Dr. DeBrule's TOE-RIFFIC Jokes

1. **Q: What kind of vehicle does Dr. DeBrule drive?**

A: A TOE truck!

2. **Q: Why do cows have hooves instead of feet?**

A: Because they lactose!

3. **Q: Why did one foot not get along with the other foot?**

A: Because they both could not be RIGHT!

4. **Q: What did the foot say to the other foot that it fell in love with?**

A: We are SOUL MATES!



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Don't Give Hammertoes a Foothold

Each of our eight smaller toes has three bones (phalanges) and two joints (interphalangeal) — our big toes have one fewer of each.

A hammertoe is a deformity of one or both of the joints of a smaller toe that most commonly results from a muscle/tendon/ligament imbalance. The phalanges should be aligned in fairly straight fashion. With a hammertoe, one of the joints bends (usually the second one from the tip of the toe) and becomes prominent.

A direct injury can predispose someone to a hammertoe. Same thing with overuse (e.g., playing certain sports). Underlying conditions such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and neuromuscular disorders make it more likely, too. Some inherited foot structures also encourage hammertoe formation more than others.

Shoes that fit poorly are major contributors to hammertoe development as well. A shoe size or toe box that is too small places excessive stress on toes. High heels are infamous for cramming toes, which helps explain why women have more issues with hammertoes than men.

A hammertoe can be painful when wearing shoes, as the misaligned toe's level of friction with the shoe is increased. Other friction byproducts include corns and/or calluses on the toes, between the toes, and on the ball of the foot. Inflammation, redness, and swelling may also enter the picture.

A hammertoe will progressively worsen without treatment. Conservative treatment is highly effective in straightening a hammertoe ... if the hammertoe is dealt with in an early stage of development while it's still flexible. A rigid hammertoe may require surgery to relieve pain and improve quality of life.

Don't let a hammertoe gain momentum. Instead, contact our office to schedule a thorough examination.

Midwest Podiatry Centers
is here to help with all
your foot and ankle needs.

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