

Corns and callus

This leaflet is intended to provide simple practical information about how you can prevent or treat problems yourself.

You may have a corn. A corn is a plug of very tough skin, often under callus, and can be quite painful.

It could be a hard corn on your toes or the sole of your foot.

A corn between your toes is called a soft corn. Soft corns are white and rubbery because the skin is damp from sweat or from not drying properly between toes. They are caused by pressure from footwear.

Other small 'pips' of hard skin on your foot are called seed corns and are linked to dryness of the skin.

How can I treat this myself?

Gently

File the area smooth with a pumice stone or a foot file whilst the skin is dry. Take care when doing this that you do not file area for too long. Do this regularly to prevent a build-up of hard skin.

Use a moisturising cream on your feet every day to keep the skin supple. This is really important if your heels are prone to cracking. **Do not apply** the moisturiser between the toes.

Corns

Do not use a 'corn cure' or corn plasters as they contain acid which can do more harm than good, especially if you have diabetes or poor circulation.

If the corn is by the side of a nail, soften it with a little olive oil. When soft, a gentle brush with a nailbrush should remove any build-up of hard skin.

Treat soft corns between your toes with surgical spirit, applied every day with a cotton bud until the corn has gone. Do not use surgical spirits if it 'stings'.

A soft wedge between the toes may help. You can buy these from chemists.

If you have tiny 'seed' corns, use plenty of moisturiser on your feet, but not between the toes.

Callus

Pressure or friction on parts of your feet can cause thickened, hard skin to build up. This is called callus. This often happens on the balls of your feet, around the heels and on the toes. Hard skin may crack around the heels, which can become painful and infected. More often than not, heavy callus is caused by wearing the wrong type of shoe for your foot.

Footwear

This is by far the best way to stop heavy callus and corns building up.

Wear shoes that do not put pressure on your toes. You need room to wiggle your toes.

Wear foot shaped shoes with a low, broad heel and an adjustable fastening (laces or straps). When buying shoes, you are advised to have your feet measured when standing and at the end of the day as your feet may not be the size you think!

The shoe should be the correct length, width and depth for your foot. There should be 1 cm or 0.5 inches between the end of your longest toe and the end of your shoe.

The upper should be soft with no hard seams or ridges and made from a natural fibre such as leather which allows moisture to evaporate.

The shoe needs to hold your foot firmly in place with an adjustable fastening, i.e. laces, straps with buckles or Velcro.

The toe box should be round and deep to give the toes room to move.

The heel should be less than 4 cm or 1.5 inches high, broad and stable.

The shoe needs a firm heel counter that fits snugly around the back of the heel and helps to maintain and stabilise the heel in place as the shoe makes contact with the ground.

Ideally the shoe will have a thick, lightweight, flexible rubber sole of a non-slip material.

You can search for other information leaflets on www.patient.co.uk and your G.P. also has access to this website.

It is recommended that you follow the advice in this leaflet and only contact the podiatry department should the symptoms not improve.

If you are aged between 19-60 years you will need a G.P. referral

Please contact the Podiatry Appointment Office
01803 217712
(8.45 – 15.15 pm Monday - Friday)

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PATIENT INFORMATION

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