

NorthPointe Foot & Ankle
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NorthPointe News



AGING FEET: TAKE SPECIAL CARE



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MEET THE TEAM Yvette McGartland

As the NorthPointe Foot & Ankle team continues to grow, we welcome Yvette McGartland as a medical assistant in training.

Yvette is here to help make sure you are comfortable in your room, gather basic information and expedite your visit by taking care of a variety of clerical duties required for each visit. She will also make sure you are set to complete your care per your doctor's direction at the end of your



exam.

Receive our monthly newsletter.
Send your email address to:
Doctors@NorthPointeFoot.com

On average, a person will walk 75,000 miles by the age of 50 and take up to 10,000 steps on any given day. This creates up to hundreds of tons of foot pressure every day. The doctors of NorthPointe Foot & Ankle share that, as we age, proper foot care is essential to maintain good health and to continue our walking independence.

In addition to years of wear and tear on our feet, disease, poor circulation, improperly trimmed toenails, and wearing shoes that don't fit properly are hard on our feet. Problems with our feet can be the first sign of more serious medical conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, and nerve and circulatory disorders. Foot pain of any kind is not normal and should be checked by a podiatrist for proper diagnosis and care.

There are several ways to reduce the risk of foot problems:

- **Check feet regularly**, or have a family member check them for skin cracks or peeling, color and temperature anomalies, or thick and discolored nails.
- **Practice good foot care.** Applying moisturizing creams and scrubbing feet with pumice helps keep the skin supple and prevent cracks. Warm Epsom salt baths soothe the feet, while certain exercises strengthen them and improve flexibility. Wash and thoroughly dry feet often.
- **Avoid walking barefoot.**
- **Keep blood circulating** as much as possible. Do this by elevating feet when sitting or lying down, stretching after sitting for long periods of time, walking, having a gentle foot massage, or taking a warm foot bath.
- **Wear proper fitting shoes.** Avoid pressure from shoes that don't fit right. Wearing comfortable shoes that fit well can prevent many foot ailments. The size of

our feet change as we age so always measure feet before buying shoes.

- **Minimize exposing feet** to cold temperatures.
- **Don't smoke.** Smokers are more likely to develop blisters and have fractures.

As we age, common foot problems include:

- **Fungal and bacterial conditions**, including athlete's foot, occur because our feet spend a lot of time in shoes - a warm, dark,

humid place that is perfect for fungus to grow.

- **Dry skin** can cause itching and burning feet. Use mild soap in small amounts and a moisturizing cream or lotion on feet every day.
- **Corns and calluses** are caused by friction and pressure when the bony parts of our feet rub against our shoes. Treating corns and calluses without the guidance of a medical expert may be harmful, especially for those with diabetes or poor circulation.
- **Warts** are skin growths caused by viruses. They are sometimes painful and, if untreated, may spread.
- **Bunions** develop when the joints in a big toe no longer fit together as they should and become swollen and tender.
- **Ingrown toenails** occur when a piece of the nail breaks the skin - which can happen if nails are not cut properly
- **Hammertoe** is caused by a shortening of the tendons that control toe movements. The toe knuckle is usually enlarged, drawing the toe back
- **Pain in the arch** and heel are caused by muscle strain in the feet. Standing for long periods of time, wearing poorly fitting shoes, or being overweight can make this pain worse.

The Michigan Podiatric Medical Association recommends that adults over the age of 65 visit their podiatrist for an annual consultation.



Staying Balanced



Many people experience increasing difficulty with balance and safe mobility as they age, which leads to the common and serious problem of falls. These problems are associated with loss of confidence and decreasing ability to function independently. In many cases it leads to the consideration of institutional care. Injuries from falls are a major cause of death in the older population. Fortunately, most causes of falls and instability can be treated successfully and the risk of falling reduced.

How common are falls and balance problems in older persons?

Each year, falls occur in over a third of persons over age 65, and in over half of persons over age 75. About a third of the older population reports some difficulty with balance or ambulation. This percentage increases in frequency and severity after age 75.

What are the major causes of falls?

The most common causes of falls include environmental hazards (such as slippery floors and loose rugs), weak muscles, unstable balance, dizziness, vision problems and side effects from medications (such as dizziness and confusion).

How can I tell if I am at risk for falling?

The most important predictors of fall risk include: muscle weakness (difficulty rising from a sitting position without use of hands to push off); unsteady balance (needing to walk slowly or with a wide base of support to maintain balance); having fallen in the past year; and taking certain medications (some blood pressure medications as well as psychoactive medications, such as sedatives or anti-depressants).

What can I do to decrease my chances of falling?

Ask your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle physician to evaluate your strength, balance, gait, entire medication list and overall risk factors for falls. The chances are good that there will be a number of things that can be done to reduce fall risk, such as adjusting medications, obtaining physical therapy, starting an exercise regimen, or receiving an assistive device such as a cane, walker, joint stabilizer or brace to make walking safer.

How can I make my home environment safer?

There are many pamphlets available to assist in hazard-proofing your home environment. Alternatively, a home health provider, such as a visiting nurse or occupational therapist, can come to your home and provide a hands-on inspection and set of recommendations. Common recommendations include installing bathroom grab bars, improving lighting in key areas, removing hazardous conditions on the floor, and making stairways and entrance areas safer.

What kind of walking aids are available and whom should I talk to about getting the right product?

A whole spectrum of walking aids are widely available, ranging from simple canes to elaborate types of walkers and wheelchairs, as well as joint stabilizers and braces. Any walking aid should be carefully measured to the right size and provide the optimal level of stability without creating too much dependency. Your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle physician can help you with proper fit and advice.

Party Cancelled

For the first time in seven years, the weather played havoc on our Pre-Dream Cruise Picnic and we were disappointed to have to cancel the annual event. We are sorry that we missed visiting with many of you in that casual and fun atmosphere.



We hope to resume our annual event and see you there in 2018.

Thank You For Supporting Our Youth



Beginning mid-July, donations were accepted at the NorthPointe Foot and Ankle office to support the programs of Berkley/Huntington Woods Youth Assistance (BHWYA) organization.

Thank you for your generosity that helped us to raise funds for the group.

BHWYA is a non-profit organization in Berkley that provides confidential, short-term family-centered counseling and referral services for young people. To find out more about BHWYA visit their website: www.BHWYA.org.



Footwear and Fall Prevention

Choosing the right kind of footwear is an important factor in reducing your risk for falls. Here are a few recommendations to keep you safe and help avoid falling:

- Avoid shoes that are excessively flexible and worn.
- Proper fit is critical. Shoes that are too big can be a hazard, but so can shoes that are too small. Ill-fitting shoes can cause calluses, corns, and sores.
- Avoid excessively slick-soled shoes, as well as those that are too "grippy." A crepe sole is recommended because it also absorbs shock.
- Wearing shoes with low heels and a large or wide contact area may reduce the risk of a fall in everyday settings and activities. Anything with a very high or thick sole creates more imbalance. Avoid any shoe with a sole over half an inch.