

The Health Benefits of Regular Foot Care

By Kate Clayton-Jones

From the clear sea air to the sandy beaches, Cape Cod invites people to savor the outdoors, but walking on uneven sand or beach stones can present challenges, especially for older adults. Regular foot care can prevent a host of problems and allow you to enjoy your beautiful surroundings. There are exercises designed to strengthen your feet and toes that will improve foot function and balance. Wading in salt water can dry your skin, but applying neutral oils like almond or coconut will clean and hydrate that dry skin and make it soft and subtle. Shoes that do not fit properly can cause blisters, and shoes that are too loose can cause trips and falls, but you can learn how to assess the fit of your shoes and make sure they are fastened securely. Wearing wool socks that wick moisture away from the skin will keep you comfortable all day. You will be able to explore your world without worrying about sore feet.

People tend to ignore their feet until something hurts, or they pay attention to their feet in the spring when they start wearing sandals and want to paint their toenails a pretty color. It's important for everyone, especially older adults, to know that regular evidence-based foot care is not a luxury. Think of your feet as your roots and foundation. Toes must spread wide and be strong and flexible to connect you to the ground and keep you from falling. The skin should be healthy and free from corns and callouses. The nails should be trimmed regularly. Healthy feet should not have any ingrown or thickening nails, wounds, blisters or callouses.

Skin care of the feet should be a frequent activity. A gentle massage with a natural oil (by natural I mean an oil you can eat) will penetrate and nourish the skin, improve circulation, and activate the 300,000 sensors in each foot that send vital information to the brain. This process, called proprioception allows us to know our own position and movements in space. It is essential for balance. And the caring touch involved in applying oil and rubbing it in also has emotional benefits for older adults who often live without touch which is vital to human wellness. At the end of a foot care session, our nurses rub oil into each foot, relax the toes and flex the foot. The effect is immediate, the skin turns pink from increased blood flow and patients breathe deeply and relax.

Footcare by Nurses employs registered nurses trained in evidence-based foot care. They examine feet, correct problems, educate, and make referrals to podiatrists or other specialists when necessary. Kristen Richie, an excellent foot care nurse who practiced on Cape Cod, knew how important healthy feet are to overall health and, and she cared for people in their homes. Sadly, her health failed. Before she died, she asked Footcare by Nurses to fill the hole she would leave behind. Now our team of trained nurses are providing in-home foot care on Cape Cod and the Islands.

If you give your feet the care they deserve, they will reward you with pain free walking, improved balance, better circulation, and a feeling of well-being. To learn more, go to www.footcarebynurses.net. Our mission is prevention and our passion is caring.

Kate Clayton-Jones, RN PhD, MBA, is the founder of FootCare by Nurses LLC