

# Foot Notes

Fall 2007



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## Soledoc thoughts

### *My four "A's"*

It's come once again to the Yakima Valley. *Autumn* has finally relieved this valley of intense heat. Most of us like the heat for a while and then, as usual, begin to whimper...usually after the first week.

This brings me to the second "A"; I offer you that oft-feared word: "*Accountability.*" It, too, comes whether we like it or not. It isn't delivered with bright sunny days, golden leaves, or crisp red apples. It comes to us in a moment of clarity when we realize that the majority of our circumstances in this life are of our own choosing. If we are brutally honest with ourselves, we know down deep we have made a major contribution to our current life situations. Many of us have sore arms from self-congratulations on our successes and "pointing fingers" somewhere else when we fail. We don't like the mirror of life reminding us of our shortcomings or plain old failures.

This is where the third "A" comes in. Acknowledgement of our successes and failures allows us to free ourselves of the burden of blame and looking for someone else to hold responsible. Most people I know don't choose to accept responsibility for other people's decisions or failures. I do know a few who are very willing to take credit for others' successes. But, I digress. The third "A" is for "*Acceptance.*" Once we accept the simple reality that we are accountable for our own actions, and we willingly acknowledge we truly are responsible, we can tackle the challenges at hand. They may be ignored diabetes control, obesity, smoking, hypertension, or general malaise. At least we can then begin to own them and begin to change direction.

Oh yes, for those of you hanging in there, the fourth "A" word is "*Action.*" We all know what that means. Wishing you all a great "Four A Season."

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# “Hey, I might’ve broken my big toe... three years ago”

There’s a myth that when you break a toe, nothing can be done for it, so there’s no sense seeking treatment. People who have injured toes without getting proper treatment for them sometimes find they are still experiencing discomfort in the area years later. Complications of not having a broken bone treated can be severe.

When a fracture isn’t examined and treated to encourage proper healing, problems will likely result. A fracture that

doesn’t heal correctly can interfere with nerve function, causing discomfort and inflammation. Sometimes a bone spur develops. In other situations, the joint may be affected, and arthritis can ensue. When the break doesn’t heal or a tendon that was pulled off by the injury fails to reattach, chronic pain and foot-function problems can result.

All these troubles can be avoided by seeking treatment for a broken toe just as you would any other broken bone. If you injured a toe some time ago and never had it treated, it’s still a good idea to have it looked at now. X-rays may be able to tell us whether anything can be done to relieve pain and restore function.



## *When your child toes in or out*

Some children naturally walk with a toed-in or -out motion. At one time, children who toed in were referred to as being “pigeon-toed,” and those who toe out are sometimes called “duck-toed.” Let’s look at each of these problems individually.

### *Toeing in*

Playground monikers aside, toeing in is not abnormal in small children. Generally, the problem resolves itself by the age of two. However, if there’s a problem in the legs and hips, self-correction will not occur. Foot problems that are detected early can often be treated using orthotics, splints, and special exercises.



### *Toeing out*

It is very common for children still learning to walk steadily to toe out. Duck-toeing lets them distribute their weight over a wider area to improve balance and stability. However, as with in-toeing, this should not continue. Orthotics are often recommended to correct this problem at an early age.

Parents who notice unusual stances or gaits in their young children who are just starting to walk should not ignore them. Early podiatric intervention can often mean correcting foot problems now so they can’t grow worse as the child ages. We’re here to help diagnose and treat problems now so your child’s feet can grow healthy and strong for the future.



## *Dry is key to reducing foot odor*

Feet that sweat profusely provide a breeding ground for odor-causing bacteria. Keeping feet clean and dry is a smart move for those who want to avoid foot-odor problems. Try the following tips to reduce sweating:

- Wash your feet daily. Pay special attention to cleaning between toes during a bath, shower, or when sponging the feet clean.
- Dry feet thoroughly—especially between the toes.
- Choose a foot powder or antiperspirant that will help keep feet dry.
- If you can, take your shoes off now and then during the day. Maybe for a bit at lunch or on a break. This will help the feet to air.
- Change shoes regularly. Try not to wear the same shoes day after day. Instead, rotate shoes so they can dry completely.
- Choose socks made from wool or cotton to help keep feet dry.

## Are you sure that's a wart?

It's common for warts to occur on feet. Plantar warts, which occur on the plantar surface, or bottom, of the foot, are perhaps the most common of these. However, there are other types of warts that show up on feet.

Warts are generally hard, rough areas on the skin. They can be flat, but some types tend to protrude. They usually have defined borders and may be gray, brown, or pretty much flesh colored with tiny black spots in them. They are caused by a virus, which can enter the skin through tiny cuts. Warts are tenacious and can return even after what appears to be successful treatment.

Unfortunately, in addition to warts, which are generally harmless, dangerous lesions, such as malignancies, can also occur. Even harmless warts shouldn't be handled at home.

People have been known to give themselves chemical burns when treating warts with over-the-counter acids. Others prefer to perform bathroom surgery on their own warts, which can lead to infection. Rather than risk these problems, come to us. We can determine whether the lesion is truly a wart and recommend treatments that are known to be successful.

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## When your plantar fascia hurts

If you're thinking, "How do I know when my plantar fascia hurts? I don't even know what that is" you wouldn't be too different from most Americans. However, if you're experiencing pain in the arch, chances are good you've damaged your plantar fascia. The plantar fascia is a fibrous band that runs from the heel to the front of the foot. When it becomes inflamed, the problem is known as "plantar fasciitis."

Often, the discomfort of plantar fasciitis can be relieved with appropriate foot support. Treatment for this condition can range from use of orthotics to steroid treatments and surgery. Surgery is usually only recommended when conservative treatment has failed to relieve the discomfort.

Plantar fasciitis can have a number of causes.

### They include:

- Shoes that don't fit well or are too old to provide adequate support.
- Feet that have very high or very low arches.
- Achilles tendons or calf muscles that are too taut.
- Standing for long periods on hard floors or sidewalks.
- Long-distance running on hard surfaces.
- Being overweight.
- Structural foot problems, such as overpronation.

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## What about gout?

Gout is an ailment with a colorful history. Over the centuries, it has been associated with some very prominent characters, such as Ben Franklin and King Henry VIII of England. Myths that gout only attacked those of a certain social class or was associated with longevity surrounded the disease. However, by 1861, some doctors had recognized its connection to uric acid.

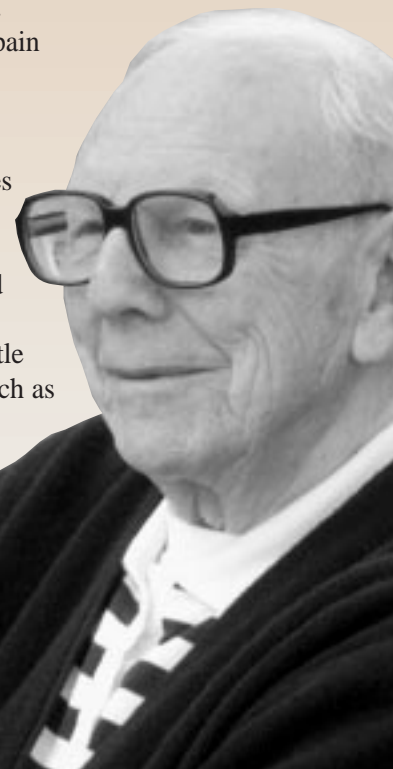
Today, gout is recognized as a condition that occurs when uric acid crystallizes in the body and attacks the joints. Often, it is associated with a hereditary inability to process uric acid.

It can have serious consequences, such as kidney failure. Most often, however, attacks of gout are related to intense pain in the big toe.

Gout attacks about a million people in this country—more often men than women. Symptoms generally include pain at the joint of the big toe, but other areas, such as knees and ankles, can also be affected. The area will often swell, feel warm, and appear red. It can be easy to mistake the problem for an infection, so a professional diagnosis should be sought.

Modern treatment for gout includes medications that battle inflammation and relieve pain. Short courses of steroids, such as prednisone, are sometimes used. Medications designed to reduce levels of uric acid in the blood may be prescribed.

Preventing attacks of gout can be as important as treating them. Staying well hydrated is necessary. Recommendations for restricting diet and use of alcohol may help as well. Weight reduction and exercise can often help lower the risk of attack.



The information included in this newsletter is not intended as a substitute for consultation with a podiatrist.  
Specific situations always require consultation with appropriate health-care professionals.