Tips to Take Care of Your Feet

You spend time taking care of your hair, skin, teeth and other parts of your body. It’s easy to take your feet for granted, but your feet are an important part of your body that let you do things you enjoy, like play sports, dance or wear your favorite shoes. In this handout, you will learn tips to care for your feet and about common foot problems that many teens have.

WHY SHOULD I TAKE CARE OF MY FEET?
Taking care of your feet in your teen years sets you up for 2 things. First, taking care of your feet as a teen lets you do things you enjoy, like sports, dance, going for a walk or wearing your favorite shoes. Second, it sets you up for healthy feet now and as you get older.

WHAT ARE COMMON FOOT PROBLEMS THAT TEENS HAVE?

- **Stinky feet.** Bad foot smells (odor) is caused by bacteria that grow in a warm, damp place, like on your feet, on your socks or in your shoes.

- **Foot pain.** This can happen when your feet grow quickly. Foot pain can also happen if you need more supportive or larger shoes or if you’re on your feet a lot.

- **Ingrown toenail.** This happens when your toenail grows into the sides or top of your toe. Ingrown toenails can be painful or become infected if you don’t keep your toenails trimmed.

- **Plantar warts.** Plantar warts, also called verruca, are painful warts on the bottom of your feet. They are caused by a virus that goes into your skin through an opening, like a crack or cut in your skin. The virus lives in warm, wet places, like locker rooms, shared showers, the gym or sports centers.

- **Athlete’s foot.** This is a common infection caused by fungus that causes your skin to itch, peel and smell between your toes. Athlete’s foot is common even if you don’t play sports. You can find the fungus in warm, wet places, like locker rooms or shared showers.

HOW CAN I TAKE CARE OF MY FEET?

- **Wear shoes that fit properly.** It is possible to find shoes that look good and support your feet. Well-made, supportive shoes that fit you properly are key to easing foot pain.

- **Wash your shoes and insoles (inside your shoes) with warm water and laundry detergent.** Let them dry completely before wearing them again. You can also wash more sturdy shoes, like sneakers, in the washing machine and let them air dry completely.

- **Change your socks, especially if they are wet.** Bacteria that causes stinky feet live in warm, wet places, like sweaty or wet socks. You can also keep a clean pair of sock in your locker, backpack or purse if your socks get sweaty or wet during the day.

- **Trim your toenails.** Your toenails should not be longer than the tops of your toes.

- **Wash and dry your feet before bed.** Warm, soapy water removes all of the dirt, sweat and bacteria that has built up on your feet during the day. It also helps prevent stinky feet or foot infections, like athlete’s foot (when fungus grows between your toes).

- **Don’t walk barefoot on pavement, sidewalks, in the gym or in locker rooms.** You can get an infection or pick up bacteria that cause stinky feet.

- **Wear flip flops if you’re using a public shower, like in a locker room.** This will help prevent bacteria from getting onto your feet and causing other foot problems, like stinky feet or an infection.

- **Talk with your doctor if you have foot pain or other common foot problems.** He/she can help figure out ways to ease your foot pain, treat infections or come up with ways to help you take care of your feet.

**A note for your parents...**
If you notice that your teen has a foot problem, it will not fix itself. Don’t wait until your teen is older to fix a problem, especially foot pain. Foot problems in the teen years can lead to other foot problems later in life.