



FOOT HEALTH CARE AND TREATMENT

'Working feet' was the theme for 2007 ... *Feet for Life Month* and the campaign features foot health advice on caring for working feet including how to look out for telltale signs of problems, when to seek the help of a podiatrist and choosing the best safety shoes.

Every year, 2 million sick days are taken due to lower limb disorders. Prolonged standing, walking, operating machinery, high heels, falling objects and slippery surfaces are just some of the dangers we expose our feet to in the workplace. Many of these sick days and injuries could be prevented by simply:

- wearing the right shoes for the job
- appropriate socks or stockings
- following a general daily foot care routine

Very often these simple steps are ignored until there becomes a physical concern, yet if neglect continues, as is shown above; it is very costly to a business which can be easily avoided.

Chiropody / Podiatry

Podiatrists (although the name chiropodist is familiar to many, and means the same as podiatrist) are highly skilled professionals trained to prevent, diagnose, treat and rehabilitate abnormal conditions of the feet and lower limbs. Podiatrists diagnose and manage problems ranging from gait disorders in children to foot pathologies in the elderly; from overuse, injuries in sport, to ulceration in patients with diabetes. They prevent and correct deformity, keep people mobile and active, relieve pain and treat infections. General treatments include skin, such as corn and callus removal, nail-care, soft tissue and connective tissue problems, and advice on footwear. Podiatrists carry out specialised work such as nail surgery and musculoskeletal assessments. They can also diagnose and treat conditions that threaten the feet of patients liable to injury or pressure related problems, as a result of medical disorders such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis or impaired circulation.

Biomechanics

Biomechanics is concerned with preservation, restoration and development of the function of the foot and its associated structure. Biomechanics refers to an understanding of the mechanics in the body and podiatrists use this to diagnose and treat the lower limb. This is a subject that interests a lot of practitioners and covers a number of areas of practice.

One area of clinical practice that focuses on biomechanics is sports injuries.

A lot of biomechanical problems are treated with orthotics. These are custom made insoles specifically for each patient that aims to improve function and reduce symptoms.