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Corns

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Every day, the average person spends several hours on their feet and takes several thousand steps. Walking puts pressure on your feet that's equivalent to 2-3 times your body weight. No wonder your feet hurt!

Actually, most foot problems can be blamed not on walking but on your walking shoes. Corns, for example, are calluses that form on the toes because the bones push up against the shoe and put pressure on the skin. The surface layer of the skin thickens and builds up, irritating the tissues underneath. Hard corns are usually located on the top of the toe or on the side of the small toe. Soft corns resemble open sores and develop between the toes as they rub against each other.

Cause

- Shoes that don't fit properly. If shoes are too tight, they squeeze the foot, increasing pressure. If they are too loose, the foot may slide and rub against the shoe, creating friction.
- Toe deformities, such as hammer toe or claw toe.
- High heeled shoes because they increase the pressure on the forefoot.
- Rubbing against a seam or stitch inside the shoe.
- Socks that don't fit properly.

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Diagnosis and Treatment

Corns can usually be easily seen. They may have a tender spot in the middle, surrounded by yellowish dead skin. Treating foot problems like corns is a team effort. You will need to work with your physician to ensure that problems don't recur.

During your office visit

- To restore the normal contour of the skin and relieve pain, your doctor may trim the corn by shaving the dead layers of skin off with a scalpel. This procedure should be done by a professional, and not by yourself, particularly if you have poor circulation, poor eyesight, or a lack of feeling in your feet.
- If the doctor discovers an underlying problem, such as a toe deformity, he or she can correct it. Most surgeries can be done on an outpatient basis.

At home

- You can soak your feet regularly and use a pumice stone or callus file to soften and reduce the size of corns and calluses.
- Wearing a donut-shaped foam pad over the corn will also help relieve the pressure. Use non-medicated corn pads; medicated pads may increase irritation and result in infection.
- Use a bit of lamb's wool (not cotton) between your toes to help cushion soft corns.
- Wear shoes that fit properly and have a roomy toe area.

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