

# MIRRORS OF YOUR HEALTH

## Problems with your feet can be indicative of other health issues

BY KATHY DAY

Special to the  
NCT Advertising Department

You figure a podiatrist would say feet are amazing. But consider this: In 80 years, a person will walk about 80,000 miles.

"That's something you generally don't think about," said, Jack Reingold, D.P.M., of Scripps Memorial Hospital Encinitas and the Coast Podiatry Group of Solana Beach. Paraphrasing a quote attributed to Socrates: "Generally, if your feet hurt, your life is miserable."

Until your feet hurt, keeping them healthy is kind of

out of sight, out of mind. That's partly because there's a lack of public education and awareness about podiatry and foot health — unlike the dental profession where they promote seeing your dentist every six months and flossing daily, he said.

"Podiatrists are experts in everything from the lower leg to the tip of the toes," with their focus determined by their interests or where they practice. People in lower-income areas tend to have a different mix of problems, he noted.

The most common problems Reingold sees in his practice are ankle and heel pain caused

by plantar fasciitis, ingrown toenails, bunions or hammer toes, and overuse injuries among athletes. He also treats people with foot problems related to diabetes.

Heel pain from plantar fasciitis, which is the most frequent complaint he hears, often results from mechanical stress or arthritis.

Fascia are inelastic sheets of tissue stretching from the toes to where they attach to the heel bone — a point of chronic stress where bone spurs often form.

"The worry is about the soft tissue that attaches to it," not the bone spurs, he said.

In about 95 percent of cas-

es, the problem responds to conservative treatment that includes anti-inflammatory drugs to knock out the swelling and inflammation. He may also use a steroid injection, ice massage, ultrasound and physical therapy.

Another key is taking the stress off the structure by taping the foot as an athletic trainer would or inserting custom or over-the-counter orthotics. And, Reingold said, "don't forget about having the right shoe." (See sidebar.)

If those options don't solve the problem, Reingold can call on a new, non-surgical approach called Radial Shock Wave Therapy that sends high-energy ultrasound bursts at the tissue and stimulates the body's healing pro-

cess, he explained.

For some, foot pain is the related to diabetes.

"Feet are really important

mirrors of health. Bad feet often signify other health problems," he said, noting that diabetes is the No. 1 reason people are hospitalized for foot infections and can lead to partial foot or below-the-knee amputation.

According to Reingold, people with diabetes can also experience hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity. The former feels as if your feet are on fire. It is a constant annoyance that can be so bad that people can't stand to have socks on, Reingold explained. And, with hyposensitivity, "your feet get so numb that you are more vulner-



Above: Jack Reingold, D.P.M., of Scripps Memorial Hospital Encinitas  
Photo courtesy of Scripps Memorial Hospital Encinitas

Below: Chelsie Cadieux, owner of Foot Solutions in Temecula. Photo courtesy of Foot Solutions in Temecula

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though healthy patients often do well on them. Another option is a mechanical treatment in the form of lasers, said Reingold, who utilizes the technology. He says that it has no known side effects.

Phillip Milgram, M.D., also employs lasers to treat nail fungus at his Head to Toe Laser Centers in La Jolla and Carlsbad. Basically, he explained, the laser targets the fungus without damaging the normal tissue, vaporizing the microscopic fungal elements.

"These elements are very hearty — they have survived the Ice Ages and live on floors, carpets and shoes for months. And they are very contagious and resistant — you spread them to other nails with your clippers and can

boil them for three minutes without killing them. But the FDA-approved Laser kills them instantly," Milgram said. "Once the fungus is killed, you need to practice good hygiene until the new nail grows out to the end of your nail bed." Milgram brings his patients back for a free re-treatment, if necessary, if there is a re-infection of the end of the old nail. "I can tell if the patient has followed my instructions, just by examining them," Milgram said.

Then they can go back to their normal activity, once the sealed ends grow to the end of the nail bed. In this manner, Milgram says he has achieved an almost 100 percent cure rate of nail fungus in more than 2,600 patients.

Bunions can also be a source of foot discomfort. Reingold said a bunion is a bone

deformity on the base and side of the big toe that occurs over time when the muscles and structure of the foot are in a state of imbalance. This causes the toe to shift out of place. Bunions are more common in women and are more often caused by genetics than shoes.

Shoes do play an important part in foot health. And orthotics are critical pieces to the puzzle.

According to [www.coast-podiatrygroup.com](http://www.coast-podiatrygroup.com), orthotics — or orthoses — is a broad description for any device you put in your shoe that helps fix "an abnormal or irregular, walking pattern ... and allows people to stand, walk, and run more efficiently and comfortably."

They can be felt pads or custom inserts for one of three purposes, the website notes: "Those designed to change foot function, those that are primarily protective in nature, and those that combine functional control and



**Phillip Milgram, M.D., of Head to Toe Laser Centers in La Jolla**

Photo courtesy of Head to Toe Laser Centers

protection."

They may be rigid for function, soft for absorbing shock, increasing balance or removing pressure, or semi-rigid for balance while walking or playing a sport.

They can be bought over-the-counter, but Reingold said they are "a very important part of podiatry .. not just a piece of plastic."

A lot of thought about the design and material goes into making the individual-

ized devices, which can be prescribed by a podiatrist or purchased at stores like Foot Solutions. Chelsie Cadieux, owner of Foot Solutions in Temecula, said they use a computer to take a scan of the foot, which is then used to fabricate the orthotics they sell. She says they "have a digitizer to capture the foot at its best position to custom-make an orthotic for each foot."

But in cases of severe structural problems, she added, orthotics can't correct them.

Reingold noted that walking and keeping your weight under control are the most important things you can do for your overall health.

At 65, if you can walk 3 mph, you have a life expectancy of more than 20 years, he said. But if you can only walk 1 mph, that reduces it to 10 years.

"And if your feet don't function properly, the rest of the body goes with it."

able to injuries as simple as burns from walking on hot pavement or from hot bath water. "You can step on a nail and not even know it."

Other common foot ailments include ingrown toenails and blisters from friction created by your shoes that can become infected.

Or, people may suffer from athlete's foot, which is a fungus and evidenced by itching and red, scaly skin. "Some say it can never be cured," Reingold said.

Treatments generally include topical medicines. He urges washing socks regularly with bleach, as well as airing out your shoes.

If athlete's foot "hops to the toenails" there's a new prob-

**"And if your feet don't function properly, the rest of the body goes with it."**

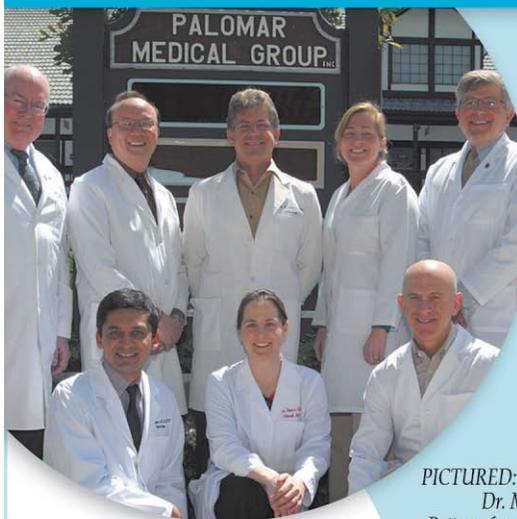
**JACK REINGOLD, M.D.**

*Scripps Memorial Hospital  
Encinitas*

lem, as the fungus tunnels into the nail, which is impervious to topical treatment.

Then the options become oral medicines, which have potentially serious side effects, such as liver disease, al-

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*PICTURED: Top, from left to right: Dr. John Lilley, Dr. Emmet Lee, Dr. Mark Shapiro, Dr. Nicole Tremain and Dr. Robert Stein. Bottom, from left to right: Dr. Osman Khawar, Dr. Rebecca Samuels (recently joined the practice) and PMG President Dr. Brian Meyerhoff. (Not pictured is Dr. Joshua Greenstein)*

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