

Getting Your Feet In Shape

(NAPSA)—It's no secret that exercise can work wonders for your physique—but what about your feet, which bear the brunt of impact during a workout? Much of what we do in the name of fitness can detract from foot health.

Studies show that 75 percent of Americans will experience foot health problems at some point in their lives. Yet most Americans believe that foot pain is normal, and do little to stop or prevent it.

The American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) estimates that our feet carry us at least 75,000 miles by age 50, and yet a recent survey shows that 70 percent of Americans have never visited a podiatrist to ensure optimal foot health. Foot care is especially important for athletes, whose rigorous physical lifestyle can wreak havoc on their feet.

“Americans engage in a variety of sports and fitness activities that, although beneficial to overall health, accelerate wear and tear on the feet and ankles,” explains Dr. Robin Ross, association member. “Fortunately, the foot and ankle are well-designed to handle this stress and support the body for a lifetime, but certain conditions, if undetected and untreated, can seriously sideline even the most fit individual. With proper detection, intervention and care, most problems can be lessened and even prevented.”

How to get healthy feet without sacrificing workouts? Follow these guidelines to get your feet in shape:

- **If the shoe fits:** Ensuring that shoes fit properly goes a long way toward preventing many common foot problems.

- **Combatting athlete's foot:** Wash feet daily with soap and



Regular podiatric exams should be part of any workout regimen.

water, and dry them completely—using a hair dryer between toes if a towel doesn't fit. Change shoes regularly and keep feet dry in fresh cotton socks.

- **Conquering odor:** Rub cornstarch or roll-on antiperspirant directly on the soles of the feet, and spray Lysol into shoes.

- **Preventing blisters, corns and calluses:** Calluses grow quickly on dry, dead skin, so be sure to use lotion and a pumice stone regularly. It's also a good idea to wear supportive shoes with a wide toe box and low heel.

“Most Americans have their car tires checked each year, so why not their feet?” asks Dr. Ross.

A doctor of podiatric medicine can address all of these conditions, as well as make an important contribution to an athlete's total health—and play a role in a fitness program.

For a list of podiatrists in your area, and for more foot health information, visit the Web site at www.apma.org or call 1-800-FOOTCARE.