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# Five Foot-Care Resolutions Worth Keeping in 2018!

By John Sigle, DPM, FACFAS



Every time we approach the New Year, I think about the hilarious skit that pop singer Meghan Trainor and funny man James Corden performed on the Late Late Show called, “All About That Change.” Both Trainor and Corden reject the popular goals of getting in shape or drinking less and quickly come to a realization that they are worthless and lead to disappointment. Unfortunately, this scenario is all too common for most Americans, and they fall short of making positive change.

Many of my patients subscribe to the more popular resolutions of getting healthier, living life to the fullest, and increasing travel. Ironically, the majority of them has been living with foot pain for years and avoided medical assistance. Many had a fear of surgery; others were afraid of taking too much time away from work. Some did not have adequate insurance coverage; others did not have knowledge of their condition or understand medical options.

The most common foot problems are heel pain, bunions, hammertoes, and toenail fungus. Most of the time, these problems can be treated with conservative methods that do not require surgery if they are treated early. This New Year is an excellent time to seek medical attention to put these problems behind you and recapture your quality of life.

## Resolution 1: Don't ignore heel pain!

Heel pain is not something to ignore. It's a signal that there is something that needs to be checked by your podiatrist. The ligaments in the heel serve as shock absorbers for the arch. Daily activity and excessive pressures can lead to ligament damage. There are several potential causes, and it is very important to have it properly diagnosed.

The most common form of heel pain is tendonitis (plantar fasciitis) which is typically caused by high arches, flat feet, tight Achilles tendons, sudden weight gain or obesity, or poorly supported shoes. Heel pain can also be caused by arthritis, a stress fracture, and bone spurs. Once your podiatrist diagnoses the cause, the proper treatment can be selected.

In most cases, heel pain can be resolved with conservative treatment like non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications, different footwear that provides better support, stretching exercises, cold therapy, and rest. Other treatments may include corticosteroid injections, orthotic devices, removable walking casts, night splints, padding and strapping, and physical therapy.

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Alternative therapies include extracorporeal shock wave therapy (sound waves to stimulate healing), a Tenex procedure (minimally invasive procedure that uses ultrasound imaging to view and guide the removal of scar tissue), and laser therapy (a pain free, non-surgical procedure to reduce inflammation, pain, and medication).

In some cases, surgery becomes the only option to repair a detached plantar fascia from the heel bone. Consult with your podiatrist to assess your condition and develop a treatment plan to end your heel pain. Untreated heel pain may lead to other more chronic problems in your legs, knees, hips and back.

## Resolution 2: Stop bunion discomfort and pain!

If you are experiencing severe pain and discomfort because of a bunion that is interfering with your daily activities and exhausted all conservative and alternative treatments, it's time to explore your surgical options. If your anxiety has caused you to avoid surgery, you may be doing yourself more harm than good. An altered gait (walking) pattern can contribute to other mechanical problems in your feet and put unwanted stress on your ankles, knees, hips, and back.

Remember, the goals of bunion surgery are three-fold: to relieve pain, to remove the bunion and keep it from returning, and to correct the alignment and mechanics of your foot. In most cases, surgery also improves the appearance of the foot. Talk with your foot and ankle surgeon about advanced surgical options available to you that achieve quick recovery, enhanced function, and beauty.

### **Resolution 3: Don't let hammertoes cramp your style!**

If you are you are tired of muddling through life with severe pain caused by hammertoes and forced to stop doing physical activities you once loved, it might be time for hammertoe correction.

There is no single surgical procedure that is best for everyone because each patient is different; however, your foot and ankle surgeon will be able to tell you the best options after making a thorough assessment of the underlying causes.

### **Resolution 4: Say goodbye to toenail fungus!**

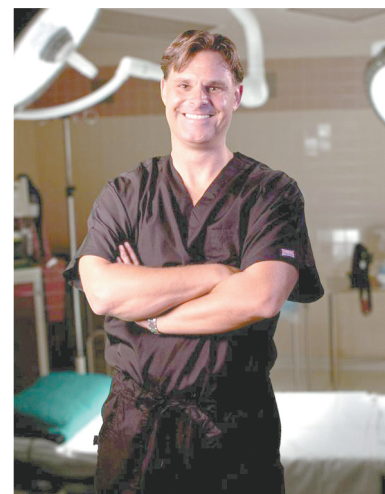
If you have thickened or discolored toenails, are concerned about the way your toenails look, or missing activities because of embarrassment, winter is the perfect time to attack your toenail fungus problem.

Several over-the-counter topical medications are available but require regular applications for several months. Results are marginally effective.

Oral prescription medications are more effective than topical creams. Medications may be costly and present side effects. Consult with your podiatrist about efficacy rates and outcomes.

Laser treatment is now considered to be the most effective method of treatment for toenail fungus. Treatments are quick, relatively pain-free, effective, and relatively affordable. Selected lasers provide a 70 to 80 percent efficacy rate.

Consult with your podiatrist to determine if you have toenail fungus and to develop a custom pathway and treatment plan to achieve optimal results. By the time summer arrives, your nails can be fully restored to their natural beauty. Wear open-toe shoes or sandals again with full confidence!



### **Resolution 5: Healthy feet in 2018!**

*This New Year you have a chance to make things right. If you are living with foot problems, take steps to recapture your quality of life. Contact the Foot & Ankle Center of Illinois at 217-787-2700 for a consultation. The Foot & Ankle Center of Illinois has locations in Springfield, Decatur, Taylorville, Sullivan, Shelbyville, and Carlinville. Visit [myfootandanklecenter.com](http://myfootandanklecenter.com) for more information on advanced surgical procedures for bunions and hammertoes, and view a short video on laser therapy.*



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