

Your Feet Are The Foundation for Good Health!

By Cindy Ladage

“The feet are your foundation for good health,” Dr. John Sigle, founder and owner of the Foot & Ankle Center of Illinois shared. “Healthy feet are a prescription for good health because they allow us to stay active, give us stability, and help our balance. Unfortunately, taking care of the feet and ankles is often the furthest thing on our minds, but it should take a high priority.”

Over the years, we tend to abuse our feet assuming they will continue to work day after day able to withstand the rigors of the daily pounding. Time takes its toll on them but a bit of prevention can literally save pain down the road! According to Dr. Sigle, “There are several things you can do to avoid foot injuries and keep your feet fit. One of the less expensive and easiest things you can do to prevent injury to the lower extremities is to select the proper shoes.”

Weekend warriors are often at the biggest risk. Typically, these individuals are not able to exercise at regular intervals throughout the week and have a tendency to concentrate all of their activity during a weekend. Consequently, they exceed the recommended frequency and duration guidelines. According to Dr. Sigle, “The problem is especially

compounded if they do not wear the proper footwear. As we age, our ligaments and muscles begin to atrophy. Weakness and inability to exert force can lead to foot deformities and complications.”

Dr. Sigle explained that proper shoes are essential to protect your feet. “There are a lot of factors that need to be taken into consideration to ensure that you are selecting the proper footwear because everyone is different. What is ideal for one person may not be the same for another; and the selection of the right shoe may vary depending on the activity and surface. That’s why it is important to choose a shoe that is comfortable and provides appropriate support for the activity.”

Poor footwear can lead to a variety of problems. According to Dr. Sigle, “Some of the foot problems that are attributed to improper footwear are shin splints, Achilles tendonitis, plantar fasciitis, stress fractures, bunions, hammertoes, and pain.”

When asked what type of shoe he recommends for seniors Dr. Sigle said, “Running shoes are the best for seniors to wear on a regular basis. They tend to be a little more kind and gentle on your feet. There are a large variety of shoes that are well-suited for your foot type and activity needs. Running shoes usually provide a



Dr. John Sigle, founder and owner of the Foot & Ankle Center of Illinois

well-shaped fit and make your feet feel lighter. Buyers must beware, though, because you often get what you pay for. It’s wise to consult with someone, like your podiatrist, who can make a recommendation based on your foot type, gait, and activity demands. It’s also helpful to purchase a quality built shoe from a knowledgeable expert who can help you select the right shoe.”

Dr. Sigle stated that seniors often make the wrong decision when purchasing shoes.

“Unfortunately, many seniors, especially females, have it engrained in their mind that shoes should be tight, small, and narrow. You cannot imagine the number of patients who think they wear an A width, when they should be in a D width. It can take several appointments before I am able to finally convince them to buy the correct size shoe. Once they are in the right size, they immediately feel better!”

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Besides choosing the correct shoe, daily stretching is another preventative technique that Dr. Sigle recommends. “Calf muscle stretching is very useful in the prevention and treatment of many foot problems. Stretching can help lengthen and ease the contraction of the muscle that can cause pain and injury. Excessive tightness of the calf muscles can contribute to many foot and some knee problems. A key point of injury is the Achilles tendon, which attaches the calf muscle to the back of the heel. When the calf muscle tightens up, it limits the movement of the ankle joint. There is a wide range of stretches that can be useful. Some of the more common methods can be achieved through a runners stretch or yoga.”

For those people who work on their feet in construction or farming, Dr. Sigle suggested that they wear a sturdy boot with arch support in it or to use an over-the-counter shoe insert or custom orthotic. He suggested that steel toe shoes be avoided unless required for employment or safety reasons because they are too rigid and do not provide ample room in the toe box. According to Dr. Sigle, “Having at least two pairs of boots that can be alternated is an excellent and cost effective way to reduce foot problems too. During inclement weather, shoes can hold onto moisture for ten days. Consequently, a damp environment can promote

fungus to grow that can lead to toenail fungus. It also harbors other micro-organisms and germs that can lead to athlete’s feet or infections. Boots or shoes that are worn every day and subject to dampness should be dried regularly before use. Shoe dryers and ultra violet light mechanisms are available to kill fungus and germs.”

Dr. Sigle also stressed the importance of wearing the proper socks. “In every case, socks affect the comfort and fit of shoes. Good quality socks that provide the proper thickness cushion and sweat-fighting qualities can minimize friction control, absorb moisture, and provide comfort.”

According to Dr. Sigle, “Keeping your weight under control can also help prevent foot injuries and pain. Our hips, knees, ankles, and feet are not meant to carry the weight we put on them. Staying fit and within the proper weight range will salvage your joints too.”

Extra weight takes quite a toll on our feet. According to Dr. Sigle, “Every step we take, with gravity, is four times our weight. If you lose ten pounds, it is like reducing forty pounds of pressure on our feet. It makes a huge difference on the feet and ankles.”

Taking care of the feet is especially important for diabetics. “Diabetics are recommended to see a podiatrist at least once a year and to follow strict foot care guidelines. Because they are prone to develop neuropathy and lose

feeling in their toes, they may not be aware of having a foot injury. Left untreated, more serious complications can result, like losing a portion of the foot or toes. It is also important for diabetics to wear shoes that fit properly and to use custom orthotics to avoid ulcers.”

Dr. Sigle also cited other ways to prevent foot problems, like practicing proper hygiene (keeping feet dry and clean), inspecting your feet and skin regularly, exercising proper nail care, seeking medical assistance whenever there is a change in a nail discoloration, and taking measures to reduce falling.

According to Dr. Sigle, “It’s vital to have good functioning feet that do not fail as we age and to have good balance. A lot of problems can be prevented with proper foot care if you are proactive when you encounter a problem. If conventional home remedies do not seem to work, schedule a visit with your podiatrist. Your feet can lead you down the path to a healthy future.”

Dr. Sigle received a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, graduated from Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine in Chicago, and completed his Podiatric Medicine and Surgical Residency at Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills, Michigan. He went on to complete Advanced Foot and Ankle Residency at Kaiser Hospital in San Francisco. Dr. Sigle is board-certified through the American Board of Podiatric Surgery in Foot

Surgery and in Reconstructive Rearfoot/Ankle Surgery. He is an Associate Clinical Professor at SIU School of Medicine, Division of Orthopaedics. He is also the founder of the Foot & Ankle Center of Illinois and Illinois Laser Center located at 2921 Montvale Drive in Springfield. Dr. Sigle also has a clinic at St. Mary’s Hospital in Decatur.

The Foot and Ankle Center of Illinois is a complete and comprehensive foot and ankle clinic specializing in deformity correction, trauma, ankle fusion and total ankle replacement, reconstructive foot and ankle surgery, arthroscopic surgery, orthotics, sports medicine, pediatric care, diabetic care, as well as general podiatry. The clinic prides itself in offering the latest advancements in surgical care and treatment and offers state of the art medical equipment for diagnosis and treatment including a digital x-ray, ultrasound diagnostic equipment, laser equipment for cosmetic treatments, and pain therapy. The clinic also has an electronic medical records system and advance medical library on its web site for clients.

Dr. Sigle publishes on a monthly basis for Healthy Cells Magazine serving central Illinois and writes a weekly blog on foot and ankle care for the State Journal-Register, My Health Illinois. The telephone number for the Foot & Ankle Center of Illinois is (217)787-2700. The web site address is myfootandanklecenter.com.