

# HEALTHY FEET ARE THE PATHWAY TO RECOVERY IN 2021!



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Submitted by  
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Healthy feet are the pathway to recovery for aging adults during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Your feet are the foundation for good health because they allow you to stay

active, provide stability, and help your balance.

The pandemic has had a devastating effect on our bodies because we have been forced to stop our normal routines and limit contact with others. The economic shutdown has caused many people to work from home and physical activity has been reduced. Older adults have had to adhere to strict activity restrictions because of high morbidity and mortality rates. Daily activities like visiting family and friends, going to restaurants, and going to the health club have been stopped altogether. Many of us in the healthcare profession are concerned that an extended pause in social and physical activity will have a devastating effect on older adults and impair their functional abilities and independence.

The National Council On Aging (NCOA) is encouraging older adults to exercise at home and remain active to maintain strength, balance, and flexibility. The NCOA stresses that exercise is essential to reduce the risk of



falls, boost the immune system, and improve the quality of life.

Many of us are now seeing signs of hope and recovery as the vaccines are made available and we approach herd immunity. Health clubs are reopening with safety precautions and spring is only two months away!

Patients who intend to re-engage in fitness activities are encouraged to start smart by

starting small. Don't rush into fitness. A modified approach will help you avoid injuries like **shin splints** and **plantar fasciitis** (heel pain). A steady, gradual program is more beneficial in the long run than an intense program that puts undue stress on your feet. Avoid walking or running on uneven surfaces and terrain, at least during the initial stages of your fitness regime. Incorporate cross-training into your fitness program to reduce stress on your feet. Fitness activities can take a toll on your feet when you begin workouts, so don't be surprised if you experience some aches and pains when you wake up in the morning. If the aches and pains persist as you progress in your workouts, consult with your podiatrist for a diagnosis and treatment to prevent further injury. Ignoring aches and pains often results in more serious injury and will delay your fitness activities.

The majority of foot and ankle problems can be treated conservatively and resolved with simple adjustments like changing shoes and socks, or using shoe inserts and pads. Minor adjustments will help prevent blisters, corns and calluses, and help relieve any aches and pains you may feel in your legs, knees, and hips. Proper foot hygiene is essential to avoid problems. Trim your toenails properly and regularly.

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## HEALTHY FEET

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Keep your feet clean and dry and inspect them on a regular basis. See a podiatrist if you experience foot blisters, nerve compression foot injuries, stress fractures of the lower leg, foot, or ankle. This includes foot infections, ingrown toenails, and toenail fungus.

People should consult with their physician or podiatrist prior to engaging in a vigorous exercise program if they are overweight or have diabetes, peripheral neuropathy, or peripheral artery disease. Most health care practitioners are in favor of engaging in an exercise conditioning program one to two months prior to beginning a strenuous physical fitness program.

To get the most out of your exercise program, it's essential to prepare your feet properly for

training so they will carry you where you need to go. Consult with your podiatrist about exercises that will help condition your feet and lower extremities to prevent injury. These exercises will help you build strength in your lower leg, foot and ankle, build flexibility and improve range of motion, and condition specific muscles,

tendons and ligaments that control the movement of your feet and ankles. This new year, you can make a difference in the quality of your life if you have a solid foundation to support your movements.

Enjoy your recreational and fitness activities this spring and avoid foot and ankle injuries. If you experience any discomfort in your feet or lower extremity, contact the Foot & Ankle Center of Illinois at **(217) 787-2700** to schedule an appointment. The Foot & Ankle Center of Illinois is located in Springfield, Decatur, Taylorville, Carlinville, Shelbyville, Sullivan, and Monticello, IL. No referrals are necessary and you can be seen within 24 hours. Most insurance plans are accepted. Visit the [myfootandanklecenter.com](http://myfootandanklecenter.com) to learn about new laser technology that is offered at the Springfield and Decatur clinics for pain therapy and treatment of toenail fungus.