

# PREVENT INJURIES TO YOUR FEET

Your ability to use your feet safely, with ease and comfort, is vital if you are to remain a valuable and productive worker.

When your job requires you to walk significant distances, stand on your feet for long periods, work in potentially hazardous areas or with potentially hazardous materials, you have some risk of foot



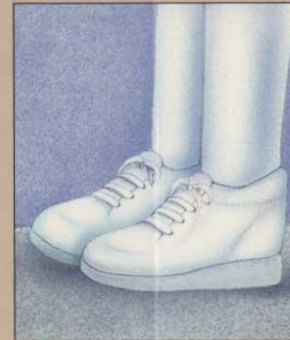
injury. However, you can do a lot to prevent injuries by keeping your feet healthy and following safe work practices.

In 1994, there were about 140,000 job-related foot injuries, 40,000 of them toe injuries, according to the National Safety Council. And those were only the reported incidents; experts say many injuries go unreported. You can't take your feet for granted. And your concern for them cannot be divided; it should continue off the job, as well as at work.

## Off-the-Job

There are a few simple things you should do:

- ◆ Bathe your feet daily; dry them thoroughly.
- ◆ Check your feet frequently for any changes – redness, swelling, growths, skin changes (e.g., corns, calluses, cracks).
- ◆ Keep your feet warm in winter, cool in summer.
- ◆ Trim your toenails straight across, slightly longer than the end of the toe.
- ◆ Prevent foot problems by visiting your podiatrist as part of your annual health check-up.
- ◆ Wear protective footwear when using lawnmowers or chain-saws, moving heavy objects, working around chemicals, or in extreme temperatures.



## On-the-Job

It is important for you to develop safe work habits and attitudes. Some things to remember:

- ◆ Be aware of the hazards of your job and the proper protective measures to take.
- ◆ Don't take chances or unnecessary risks. Take time to do your job right.
- ◆ Be alert. Watch for hidden hazards.
- ◆ Be considerate. Watch out for other workers' safety.
- ◆ Follow the rules. Don't cut corners. Use your equipment as specified.
- ◆ Concentrate on the job. Inattention can lead to accidents.
- ◆ Pace yourself. Work steadily at a comfortable speed.
- ◆ Keep your work area clean and your tools in their place.

## Protective Footwear is Essential

Safety shoes and boots protect your feet, help prevent injuries to them, and reduce the severity of injuries that do occur in the workplace.

Only one out of four victims of job-related foot injury wear any type of safety shoe or boot, according to the National Safety Council. The remaining three either are unaware of the benefits of protective footwear or complain about it.

**Safety footwear can be comfortable, flexible, stylish, and still provide protection from injury.**

The foot is a most valuable part of your body subjected to injury in industry. Because of the many potential work hazards, it is important that you discuss with your supervisor the safety shoe, boot, or other protective equipment that you need for your protection.

**HAZARD: falling and rolling objects, cuts and punctures**

**PROTECTION:** steel-toe safety shoes; add-on devices: metatarsal guards, metal foot guards, puncture-proof inserts, shin guards

**HAZARD: chemicals, solvents**

**PROTECTION:** footwear with synthetic stitching, and made of rubber, vinyl or plastic

**HAZARD: electric current**

**PROTECTION:** shoes or boots with rubber soles, and heels, no metal parts and insulated steel toes

**HAZARD: extreme cold**

**PROTECTION:** shoes or boots with moisture- or oil-resistant insulation, and that can repel water (if this is a problem); insulated socks

**HAZARD: extreme heat and direct flame**

PROTECTION: overshoes or boots of fire-resistant materials with wooden soles

**HAZARD: high voltage**

PROTECTION: shoes with rubber or cork heels and soles, and no exposed metal parts

**HAZARD: hot surfaces**

PROTECTION: safety shoes with wooden or other heat-resistant soles; wooden sandals over shoes

**HAZARD: sanitation contamination**

PROTECTION: special plastic booties or overshoes; paper or wood shower sandals

**HAZARD: slips and skids (from wet, oily surfaces)**

PROTECTION: shoes with wooden soles or deated, non-slip rubber or neoprene soles; non-skid sandals that slip over shoes; strap-on cleats for icy surfaces

**HAZARD: sparking (from metal shoe parts)**

PROTECTION: safety shoes with no metal parts and non-sparking material

**HAZARD: sparks, molten metal splashes (that get inside shoes)**

PROTECTION: foundry boots with elastic sides or quick-release buckles for speedy removal

**HAZARD: static electricity**

PROTECTION: shoes or boots with heels and soles of cork or leather

**HAZARD: wetness**

PROTECTION: lined rubber shoes or boots; rubbers or shoes of silicone-treated leather

**If Your Feet are Injured at Work**

Report any injury to your foreman or supervisor promptly for necessary first aid. Then see your podiatrist if further treatment is recommended. Foot pain is not normal, though many people try to bear up under it, under the mistaken notion that feet are supposed to hurt. And proper foot care improves your efficiency and keeps you on the job.

Your podiatric physician and surgeon is a specialist who diagnoses and treats foot disorders and injuries medically and surgically. By visiting him or her regularly, you can insure yourself a lifetime of pain-free feet.



This pamphlet is one of a series produced by APMA that discusses several foot health conditions and concerns, including foot health, arthritis, high blood pressure, athlete's foot, warts, aging, foot orthoses, diabetes, children's feet, surgery, Medicare coverage, injuries, heel pain, nail problems, walking, women's feet, footwear, fungal nails, and others. The pamphlets are available from many podiatrist members of APMA. Or call:

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# ON-THE-JOB FOOT HEALTH

