

footprints

An informational newsletter for patients of APMA member podiatrists

Winter 2012

Boots: A Perfect Fit, Please

Downhill skiing provides an exhilarating feeling and an excellent workout, too. But as with most winter sports, skiing requires proper equipment and footwear to prevent foot and ankle injuries. Don't ruin your ski holiday with ill-fitting ski boots. Choosing the right kind of ski boots will enhance your skiing experience and make it more enjoyable.

When choosing ski boots to buy or rent, it's important to remember that boots should be comfortable. Ski boots should be snug and have an accurate fit. If the boots are too loose, your foot and ankle can slide around inside the boot, potentially leading to sprains, strains, and fractures caused by the constant forward and lateral movement of skiing. If boots are too tight, they will rub and blister your foot. The boots must be rigid enough to keep your feet and ankles firmly in place. The toe box should be snug but not too tight.

Ski boots are available in a forward-entry style, a rear-entry style, or a hybrid style that incorporates both designs. Skiers who use custom orthotics to correct biomechanical imbalances can transfer orthotics to ski boots to help maintain the best possible foot position. To find the right boot, work with ski shop technicians who are familiar with different foot types. If you have purchased new boots, bring them to your podiatric physician so your foot can be evaluated with the boot.

Finally, a good pair of socks is crucial for winter sports like skiing. Socks will keep your feet dry, warm, and comfortable in your boots. Take socks along with you when having your ski boots fitted.

**What's true for you is also true for your child.
Don't try to get by with last year's ski boots.
"Children's feet grow rapidly, therefore
make sure all equipment fits properly
and is the correct size,"**

said APMA member and podiatric physician Ami Sheth, DPM.



Tips for Snowboarding

Because boots for snowboarding differ from ski boots, here are few tips to keep in mind when purchasing or renting snowboard boots.

- Make sure to get real snowboard boots (not hiking boots) that fit correctly to keep your feet comfortable and warm.
- To determine proper fit, try on both boots and lace them up completely. Laces should be snug. Stand up and walk around to see if the boot laces remain snug. Pay attention to whether the boots rub or pinch anywhere.
- Try on both boots while wearing thin synthetic socks with padding. Synthetic socks are preferred to control moisture as well as prevent friction.

1. Brandle, Rose. "How Skiing Impacts the Foot." Accessed November 2, 2012. www.basildonpodiatry.co.uk/advice/sports/skiing.
2. eHow. "How to Get the Right Fit With Snowboard Boots." Accessed November 1, 2012. www.ehow.com/how_14491_fit-with-snowboard.html.
3. Podiatry Affiliates, PC. "Winter Sports Advice." Accessed November 2, 2012. www.podiatryaffiliates.com/referring-winter-sports.htm.

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Socks 101

Winter is upon us, and it's time to warm up your feet with a good pair of socks. Socks are a vital part of foot health. They absorb sweat to reduce foot odor, provide padding, and protect your feet from the friction created by your foot rubbing against the inside of your shoe.

Here are some guidelines to help you choose the perfect pair of socks.

- **Fit**—Socks should fit perfectly—like a glove—and feel comfortable. The sock should not be too loose or large because socks that bunch can cause friction and lead to blisters. Socks shouldn't be too small or tight either; small socks can decrease your circulation and comfort.
- **Fabric**—Socks can be made out of synthetic fibers, natural fibers, or a combination of the two. Socks made of synthetic fibers such as acrylic, nylon, and Lycra keep their shape, retain their resilience, and “wick” moisture away from the skin so feet stay dry. Socks made of natural fibers such as cotton, linen, silk, and wool are durable, strong, and soft. They also absorb foot moisture, helping to keep feet dry. Cotton, for example, is breathable but also heat-resistant and shock-absorbent. Wool socks offer extra warmth and extreme comfort for the feet.
- **Cushioning**—Consider socks with a full cushion and padded sole support. These types of socks will provide your feet with added protection and cushioning, leaving your feet less tired at the end of the day. Also, look for socks with reinforced heels and toes, as these areas wear out the fastest.

APMA makes choosing socks a breeze. Simply look for those with the APMA Seal of Acceptance on their labels or packaging. Go to APMA.org and click on *Footwear and Products* to find hosiery and socks awarded the APMA Seal of Acceptance.

1. Weaver, Benjamin, DPM. “Socks: Getting in Shape with New Technologies.” August 31, 2012; accessed October 23, 2012. ksfootdoc.blogspot.com/2012/08/socks-getting-in-shape-with-new.html.
2. WikiHow. “How to Buy Socks That Are Good for Your Feet.” Accessed October 23, 2012. www.wikihow.com/Buy-Socks-That-Are-Good-for-Your-Feet.

Foot Myths: Don't Believe the Hype

People have used home remedies for foot ailments for many years. Many of these “cures” are not medically sound. Below are some foot myths, debunked.

- **Listerine and Vicks VapoRub will cure toenail fungus.** The claim is that these chemicals will cure toenail fungus and provide a safe alternative to prescription antifungal pills and a cheaper alternative to topical fungal medications. These chemicals cannot effectively penetrate the skin underneath the nail where the nail fungus is located. Nail fungus should be diagnosed and treated properly by a podiatric physician.
- **Vinegar can cure foot odor.** People often mix a water and vinegar soak to treat foot odor. Vinegar contains acetic acid and may contribute indirectly to reducing foot odor. The most efficient way to kill odor-causing bacteria is by using antiperspirants on the skin of the foot. Antiperspirants reduce the sweating that leads to the bacteria in the first place. So, while a vinegar soak for foot odor may be helpful in an indirect way, there is a better, more efficient solution to this problem.
- **Aspirin and ibuprofen are good treatments for plantar fasciitis (heel pain).** Taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin and ibuprofen is believed to help with heel pain. However, these medications provide only temporary pain relief and do not treat the underlying condition. Seeking medical attention from your podiatric physician is the first line of defense in treating heel pain.

1. Kilberg, Scott, DPM. “Caring For Your Foot's Skin: Common Myths.” August 3, 2011; accessed October 23, 2012. http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Scott_Kilberg_DPM.

Healthy Winter Feet

Most people get concerned about the health and appearance of their feet during the summer months. During the cold and wet winter months, your feet can really take a beating. Your feet will thrive during these cold months if you follow these foot-health tips:

- **Footwear**—Invest in a good pair of water-proof winter boots or shoes. Make sure your shoes fit properly. If they are too tight, they can cause ingrown toenails or blisters. If you do get a blister, apply antiseptic cream and bandages. If the blister doesn't heal in a timely manner, consult your podiatric physician.
- **Foot care**—The winter months can leave people vulnerable to dry, cracked feet. To keep your feet from drying out, moisturize them once or twice a day, especially around the heels and sides of the foot. For a list of foot creams and moisturizers approved by podiatric physicians and that have received APMA's Seal of Acceptance, go to APMA.org and click on *Learn About Feet*.
- **Foot Fungus**—Fungus may live inside a winter shoe or boot over the summer, just waiting to re-infect a foot or toenail. If you had foot fungus last winter, take precautions by using an anti-fungal spray on boots or shoes that were worn last winter before wearing them this season.

“People with fungal infections are at high risk for re-infection, especially if they don't treat their shoes,”

said APMA member and podiatric physician E. Kent Picklesimer, DPM.

1. Feeny, Jennifer, DPM. “Winter Care and Maintenance.” December 5, 2009; accessed October 25, 2012. www.articlesbase.com/health-articles/winter-foot-care-and-maintenance-1545748.html.
2. Haran, Christine. “Booting Up: Don't Forgo Foot Care During Winter.” November 13, 2010; accessed October 23, 2012. <http://coolnurse.healthology.com/skin-problems/foot-care/article1211.htm>.
3. Medical News Today. “Five Treats For Healthy Winter Feet.” January 10, 2009; accessed October 23, 2012. www.medicalnewstoday.com/releases/134993.php.

Doctors of podiatric medicine are podiatric physicians and surgeons, also known as podiatrists, qualified by their education, training, and experience to diagnose and treat conditions affecting the foot, ankle, and related structures of the leg.