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September is Fall Awareness Prevention Month

Among older Americans, falls are the number one cause of injuries and death from injury, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. **September is Fall Awareness Prevention Month.** The purpose of this month and Fall Awareness Prevention Day which is recognized on the first day of fall, September 22, is to increase awareness about how to prevent fall-related injuries among older adults.

Not only are seniors more at risk for falls, when they do fall, it poses a greater risk for injuries, hospitalization and complications. Fall-related injuries occur more commonly than strokes and are the most preventable cause of nursing home placement. For a ground-up approach to fall prevention, seniors should start by examining the health of their feet.



Painful foot conditions, such as osteoarthritis, corns, bunions, hammertoes, flat feet, high arches and diabetes complications, can make it difficult to maintain balance and coordination when walking or standing. Also, the very exercises intended to correct risk factors for falls, such as lower-body weakness, as well as gait and balance problems, are difficult to perform when one suffers from painful foot and ankle conditions.

While the factors causing falls are numerous, we recommend the following steps to reduce or minimize fall risk.

- 1. Examine your feet.** As the gatekeeper of your own health, make sure you examine your feet regularly. At the first sign of bumps, lumps or other changes in your feet, make an appointment with our office.
- 2. Do not ignore foot pain.** Foot pain is not just a normal consequence of growing older. It is likely a treatable condition. For proper diagnosis and treatment, be sure to pay attention to your feet and call our office if you experience any pain.
- 3. Wear shoes that keep you safe.** Choose rubber or nonskid soles that fit well. Athletic shoes are a good choice. Choose flats or shoes with low heels and avoid high heels or platforms. Don't wear flip-flops or backless shoes or slippers. And remember never to walk around in stocking feet even when indoors.
- 4. Protect.** Use padding, insoles or whatever special footwear you are prescribed. Be sure to wear these, along with comfortable, sensible shoes every day.
- 5. Check your medications.** Talk with your primary care physician about your medications at every visit. The way your body reacts to medications can change as you age, so certain medications that were fine in the past may cause side effects now. Your health care provider can help review your medications and make changes if needed.
- 6. Check your vision and hearing.** Problems with vision or hearing can lead to falls. Get your eyes checked at least once a year and your hearing every other year. Take time to adjust to new glasses. Inner ear problems can affect your balance.
- 7. Remove hazards from your home.** Be sure to remove items that you can trip on like throw rugs, boxes or cords.
- 8. Exercise.** Simple stretching exercises can help you maintain strength and mobility in your feet and ankles, as well as provide pain relief. We can help you determine which exercises are appropriate for you.
- 9. Be flexible.** At times, surgery is the most appropriate treatment for a given condition. Fortunately, many simple surgical techniques allow foot surgery to be performed on an outpatient basis.
- 10. Improve your balance by wearing foot braces or custom orthotics.** They will give your ankle extra support while walking. Custom orthotics put your foot back in the 'neutral' position thus supporting your arch and correct pronation and supination.

continued on back

Westfield Foot and Ankle

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Office Hours

Mon: 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Tues: 9:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Wed: 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Thurs: 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Fri: 8:30 a.m.- 12 noon
Sat. & Sun. - Closed

Meet Our Doctor



**David R. Sullivan,
DPM, FACFAS, FACCWS**

www.westfieldfoot.com



At Westfield Foot & Ankle, we now offer the **Moore Balance Brace**. This brace is designed to provide maximum balance and stability for older adults who have ankle instability, mild foot drop, walk with difficulty or have a history of falls or ear falls. The Moore Balance Brace also provides support for individuals who have been diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy, ankle osteoarthritis and vestibular disease.

Just one fall can rob seniors of their independence and can dramatically reduce their quality of life. Visit our office to learn how taking good care of your feet and ankles can reduce the risk of a life-altering slip, trip or fall.

Article Courtesy of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons. Additional information courtesy of the Blanchard Valley Health System.

Our New COVID-19 Guidelines

We want you to know that Westfield Foot & Ankle is open and ready to see you. We want to assure you that we have implemented protocols to limit the number of people you encounter when you visit our office.

Here are our new guidelines in the age of coronavirus.

1. If you are experiencing (or have experienced within the last two weeks) a cough, runny nose, or difficulty breathing, please call us to reschedule your appointment.
2. If you or anyone in your family has traveled outside of the U.S., and/or cruised in the last two weeks, and/or been around someone possibly infected with the virus, please reschedule your appointment.
3. We are requesting that only the patient and caregivers enter the office. To minimize exposure, we ask that when possible the patient comes alone or brings only one additional person.
4. Our podiatrist and medical assistants will sadly not shake your hand when introducing themselves but will ALWAYS deliver exceptional care with a smile.
5. We will continue sanitizing items and surfaces regularly used throughout the day in our office as is our normal protocol.
6. We are asking patients to call from the parking lot upon arrival to get checked in. We will call back when a room is available. This is to minimize the amount of patient to patient interaction in our waiting/reception area.
7. At checkout, we will do our best to provide clean writing instruments but highly recommend bringing and using your own pen when possible.
8. We are following Governor Eric Holcomb's mask mandate and ask that all patients arrive wearing a mask for their appointment unless they have a medical condition which prevents them from wearing a mask.
9. Hand sanitizer will be available for use upon arrival and departure from your appointment. Restrooms are also always available for washing your hands with soap and water if you prefer.



Tell Injuries to Take a Hike This Fall

As summer winds down and the air turns crisp, many outdoor enthusiasts prepare to welcome fall from the hiking trail. Hiking is a great form of exercise and the perfect way to experience the shift in seasons while watching the leaves change color. However, a successful hike takes more preparation than one might think. Before hitting the trail, hikers should be mindful of the strain this outdoor activity can put on their feet and ankles.

Proper Footwear

Wear shoes with good support. Tennis shoes aren't the best for hiking and lack the support needed for hiking on uneven, steep or slippery terrain. Hiking boots should be well-insulated and moisture proof with a stiff sole for maximum support.

Take It Easy

As with most physical activities, it's better to start small and work your way up as you get comfortable and more confident. Physical conditioning is important to avoiding injuries. Strengthening, stretching and balancing exercises will help immensely when it comes to more challenging terrain. Do as much as your body can handle, and ease into a hiking routine before tackling long, strenuous trails.

Body Talk

Listen to your body and take a break if something starts hurting. Hiking in pain will only increase the risk of a serious injury. If you experience foot or ankle pain while hiking and it doesn't get better with rest, schedule an appointment with a foot and ankle surgeon as soon as possible. Ankle and Achilles tendon injuries need to be evaluated and treated as early as possible. If left untreated, these injuries could ruin your hiking plans for a long time.

If you suffer an injury out on the trails this fall, remember the RICE method – rest, ice, compression, elevation and seek care from our office as soon as possible

Article Courtesy of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons



Good to know... *Dr. David Sullivan is a certified wound specialist and can perform in office procedures such as wound care, biopsies, skin grafts, ingrown toenail removal, etc. Having patients come to our office vs. a hospital setting can help relieve the hospital resources as well as minimizing patient exposure.*

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