

Cracked Skin (Feet)

Definition

- Cracked skin on the toes or feet

Health Information

Symptoms

- Cracks are always painful
- Pain increases when exposed to soap or even water
- Minor bleeding can occur

Causes

- The soles of the feet are involved. Most often, cracks occur on the heels and big toes.
- Cracked skin of the feet is caused by repeated contact with moisture. Swimmers often have this problem.
- The main cause is wearing wet or sweaty socks.
- This is called tennis shoe or sneaker dermatitis.

Prevention

- Change socks whenever they are wet or sweaty.
- Take an extra pair of socks to school.
- When practical, do not wear shoes. Go barefoot or wear socks only.
- Do not use bubble bath or other soaps in the bath water. Soaps take the natural oils out of the skin.
- Use a moisturizing cream on the feet after baths or showers.
- Wear shoes that allow the skin to "breathe".

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Cracks on the feet can be very painful.
- The main cause is frequently wearing wet (or sweaty) socks.
- Cracked feet usually can be treated at home.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Shallow Cracks - Use Ointment:

- Cracks heal faster if protected from air exposure and drying.
- Keep the cracks constantly covered with petroleum jelly 3 times a day.
- If the crack seems mildly infected, use an antibiotic ointment instead. No prescription is needed. Put it on the cracks 3 times a day.
- Covering the ointment with a Band-Aid or a sock speeds recovery.
- Option: If you have it, a liquid crack sealer works even better. Don't use crack sealer and ointment together.

3. **Deep Cracks - Use Liquid Crack Sealer:**

- Deep cracks of the feet or toes usually do not heal with ointments.
- Use a liquid skin bandage to seal the crack. Many brands of liquid bandage (crack sealer) are available at your drugstore. No prescription is needed.
- Liquid skin bandage is a plastic coating product that seals wounds.
- It is the best way to relieve pain and promote healing.
- Wash and dry the wound first. Then put on the liquid. It comes with a small brush or with a swab. It dries in less than a minute. Then apply a second coat. It's waterproof and may last a week.
- Start with 2 layers. Put on an extra layer as often as needed.
- As the crack heals from the bottom, the plastic layer will be pushed up.

4. **What to Expect:**

- Most cracks heal over in 1 week with treatment.
- Deep cracks heal if you keep them covered all the time with crack sealer. Deep cracks will heal in about 2 weeks with crack sealer.
- Untreated cracks can last for years.

Call Your Doctor If

- Starts to look infected (redness, red streak, pus)
- Cracks last more than 2 weeks on treatment
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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