



Gardening Season: Are You in Shape?

Medical director reveals why gardening causes foot problems and offers ways to prevent feet aches and pains.

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Are your feet out of shape?

Dr. Paul Kasdan, a podiatrist and founder and medical director of Ourheathnetwork.com, says they may be, and your routine summer gardening activities—although good for you—may bring out the worst in those foot muscles.

"Gardening is an exertive weight-bearing activity and should be considered a sport rather than a passive hobby," Dr. Kasdan says.

Gardening forces your feet to move while supporting weight, balance your stance to reduce falls and act as shock absorbers.

To decrease the pressure on your feet, Dr. Kasdan says to wear appropriate foot gear—socks and shoes with proper support and cushioning—and to stretch before working in the garden.

Also, be sure to tend to your feet at the end of the day, and don't forget to take out the inner-soles of shoes and let them dry from the day's perspiration. Dr. Kasdan advises washing feet well and treating any blisters, sores or inflamed areas with first-aid cream. If necessary, see a podiatrist.

For foot gear, Dr. Kasdan recommends:

- A rounded-toe shoe with a deep toe box helps prevent pain due to corns and bunions, toe blisters and ingrown toenails.
- Rubber soles prevent bruises when stepping on stones, and they provide good shock absorption for the entire body.
- Loose socks with mild elastic compression at the top will ensure good circulation to the feet.
- Socks made of a lycra and cotton blend are very efficient at keeping the feet cool and wicking sweat off the feet.

(For more gardening garb, [click here.](#))

Before doing any work in the garden, take a few minutes to stretch your feet.

These are two exercises Dr. Kasdan recommends:

1. Lunge exercise to stretch the Achilles tendon. Facing a wall, stand about three feet out and lean onto the surface with arms shoulder-width apart. Keeping your back straight, move your right foot towards the wall until it is about one-and-a-half feet away. With your left foot straight, bend the right foot until you feel a stretch in the Achilles tendon. Hold this position for 15 seconds and repeat with other leg. Repeat several times.
2. Ankle rotation. Sitting on a chair, extend your right foot and rotate your toes toward you. Hold for five seconds. Then rotate to the right, down and to the left, holding each position for five seconds. Rotate your ankle in a complete circle. Do this for one to two minutes on each foot.