



Foot & Practice

A foot health message from
Mawson Lakes Podiatry Clinic

Obesity increases the prevalence of foot problems



In addition to an increase in the incidence of heart disease, stroke and diabetes, the obesity epidemic has resulted in an increase in musculoskeletal conditions. Excess weight places force on the tendons, fascia and cartilage that they aren't able to sustain without serious damage. Foot conditions can lead to a cycle of deteriorating health in obese patients as once walking becomes difficult it is increasingly unlikely that patients will be able to lose the weight they need to lose to decrease the multifaceted risks to their health.

Treatments that work for patients with a healthy BMI can have little effect in an obese patient. For an otherwise healthy patient with heel pain or plantar fasciitis, rest will often resolve the condition, but for obese patients, the simple act of standing up will place so much force on the feet that no amount of rest will cure the problem. Patients should instead be assessed for assistive devices, such as orthotics, braces and shock absorbing insoles that will support the foot during movement. Patients should be encouraged to exercise in an effort to lose weight and gain strength, and a healthy eating plan should be developed in line with an overall medical treatment plan.

Patients with a BMI >30 are at increased risk of collapsed arches, plantar fasciitis and pronation; making them more susceptible to chronic plantar heel pain, ankle pain and overall musculoskeletal problems. Ankle pain that would be attributable to a sprain in patients with a healthy BMI is usually attributable to an overloading of the tendons in obese patients.



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