

COMMON FOOT DISORDERS: PODIATRY SCOPE OF PRACTICE

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Introduction

The foot plays a major role in a series of complicated activities centred around mobility. Most foot disorders are complex in their aetiology and pathology and involve the skeletal components as well as the soft tissue of the foot. Infections and general diseases are not always the only cause of disorder, but biomechanical function of the foot is regularly a factor since the foot and the lower limb are constantly involved in the mechanical functions of providing support and locomotion.

Common foot disorders can be classified into three broad categories according to their nature and origin.

- κ Biomechanical factors
- κ Conditions caused by infections
- κ Manifestations in the foot of general or systemic disease

The biomechanical causes of foot disorders can be subdivided as:

- κ Primary intrinsic defects – affect the structure and function of the foot. This includes mal-alignment between the hindfoot and forefoot, which cause abnormal pronation or supination.

- κ Primary extrinsic defects – affect the structure and function of the lower limb. Conditions such as genu varum (bow legs) and genu valgum (knock-knees) have an influence on the function of the foot.
- κ Stress factors – including occupation, weight and footwear.
- κ Direct trauma – including sport injuries that are a result of biomechanical malfunction.

Method of treatment

Podiatrists make use of various clinical techniques to treat conditions affecting the foot and lower limb. Orthotics plays a major part in the treatment of these problems.

Orthotics can be divided into three categories;

- κ Non-casted simple insoles
- κ Casted accommodative orthotics
- κ Casted functional orthotics

The type of orthotic device is determined after clinical and biomechanical assessments of the patient's condition.

To follow is a table that includes some of the most common conditions seen by podiatrists and the possible treatments for the condition.

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Common foot conditions

	Conditions	Treatment
Skin	Corns (Heloma durum) Callus (Hyperkeratosis) Verrucae Pedis (Plantar warts) Skin infections e.g. Tinea pedis	Clinical management with debridement and orthotics Chemotherapy Topical antifungal treatment Foot care advice
Nails	Onychocryptosis (ingrown nails) Onychocytic nails (thick nails) Onychomycosis Onychophosis (callus in sulcus) Onchogryphosis (deformed nail)	Partial/total nail avulsion Cutting of nail Topical antifungal treatment Debridement
Diabetic patients	Diabetic ulcers Diabetic foot conditions General Diabetic foot assessment	Ulcer treatment General foot care Diabetic foot education Diabetic foot screening
Rheumatology	Foot deformities Joint pains Shoe problems	Foot care Palliative and accommodative orthotics Shoe recommendations Silicone digital toe splints/wedges/shields
Paediatrics	Pes planus In-toeing gait Sever's disease Osgood Schlatter disease Navicular pain	Functional orthotic prescription Shoe recommendations
Sports injuries Overuse injuries related to biomechanics	Heel pain Shin splints Metatarsalgia Patella tendonitis Achilles tendonitis Morton's neuroma	Functional or accommodative orthotics Simple Insoles Sport shoe recommendations Training program modifications