

## *Looking after hard skin and corns on your feet*

### *What is hard skin, and why does it build-up on my feet?*

Our skin is designed in such a way that areas which are put under high pressure or friction, respond by thickening to protect our feet.

Keratin is a protein found in our skin, it accumulates on the surface of the skin when under pressure, forming a thick protective layer called callus, this has a yellowish colouring to it.

Pressure on our feet can come from weight gain, for example in pregnancy, or an increased level of activity. This increased pressure, will encourage the hard skin to keep building-up on the feet.

The way we walk, in other words our gait, also contributes to the way pressure is distributed on our feet. A podiatrist is well placed to assess gait pattern and foot function, and is able to diagnose, treat and manage any abnormalities in the foot that may be an added cause for pressure. A [biomechanical assessment](#) is used to assess foot function.

The thickening in the layers of the skin can feel tight, itchy and cause pain when you walk. The skin can dry out and crack, especially around the heels.

Wearing open heeled footwear like flip flops a lot of the time during the summer, can cause cracked heels. If the crack in the heel is not treated promptly and appropriately, there is a chance of picking up an infection in the skin.

For people who have [diabetes](#), continuous build-up of hard skin can cause wounds to form underneath the callus, if not treated and managed by removing the hard skin and cushioning the affected area adequately. It is advisable to visit a podiatrist to have the hard skin paired away.

**Corns** are thickened dense areas of hard skin, which can sometimes develop on the feet. They can be more painful than calluses. Corns can appear over areas of bony prominences when under pressure. If they are painful enough to need cushioning, see a podiatrist to have them removed.

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## *What can I do to help manage it, or prevent it getting worse?*

There is a simple self-care routine you can adopt at home, to really help reduce the build-up of unwanted hard skin and corns on your feet.

Moisturising your feet with an urea-based cream every day, will do just the job. It goes a long way to help break down the hard skin and hydrate the skin.

That and other things like, gently filing any areas of hard skin with an emery board weekly, and making sure you wear shoes and socks that are cushioned, supportive and well suited to the shape of your feet.

By following this simple self-management tips regularly, you'll be sure to see a significant improvement in your feet.

## *4 Top tips to help reduce pain, and improve the appearance of hard skin on your feet.*

### **1. Moisturise your feet with a good urea-based cream every day.**

Urea is a keratolytic, which means it breaks down keratin and also adds moisture to the skin.

Using one with a strength between 10-25% will do. There are a number of brands widely available, Dermatronics, CCS, Flexitol, Scholl etc. Dermatronics Hard Skin Removing Balm is one I recommend regularly because of its noticeable benefits.

Dermatronics **Hard Skin Removing Balm** contains 25% urea, it is light and non-greasy, you don't have to use too much of it – which means it lasts longer. It smells great, and leaves your feet feeling soft and supple. It is deal for diabetic feet too.

Good moisturising creams are a great way of re-hydrating the skin, allowing the skin to heal. The best time to apply cream to your feet is immediately after you've had a bath or shower - make sure to dry your feet properly, before you put on the cream.

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Your skin is able to absorb the cream much better, after a bath or a shower, because it becomes more porous when moist.

## **2. Gently file any dry skin off your feet with a good quality emery board once a week.**

Filing off the layers of dry skin on your feet weekly, means the hard skin won't build-up overtime.

If you choose to soak your feet before you file the hard skin, this is okay, but only do so once a week, for no more than 10 minutes - obviously wash them every day. Soaking your feet too often, can strip the skin of its natural oils, making the skin dry out.

After soaking your feet, dry them properly with a clean towel, making sure to dry well between the toes – this ensures the skin doesn't get too soggy and split. It also reduces the chances of you developing [Athlete's foot](#).

## **3. Always wear a good pair of shoes that are cushioned, supportive and fits the shape of your feet.**

Suitable shoes must:

- be made of a breathable material – leather is a good example.
- have a deep heel cup to prevent shearing stresses on the heel, basically to reduce pressure on the heel pad.
- have a fastener, for example a lace-up, buckle, T-bar or Velcro strap will hold the foot in place in the shoe, reducing movement and friction.

It is important to wear good fitting shoes that will accommodate the shape of your feet - Rounded toes = Rounded toe-box and so on.

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If you have a bunion or a hammer toe, it is always good to wear shoes that are wide and deep enough in the toe-box, to allow space for your toes to wriggle freely; and does not put any pressure on any bony prominences.

Constant rubbing of tight shoes on bony lumps and bumps, causes hard skin and corns to develop in those areas. Conversely, if the shoe is too loose, it can rub and chafe. Have your feet measured if you are unsure of your size.

Always wear the right shoe for each activity. If you are a keen walker, you'd want a good pair of lace-up walking boots, you definitely won't be going on long walks in slip-on shoes, because this style of shoes, will offer your feet no support.

#### **4. Wear socks of a suitable breathable material**

Wearing socks that are made of natural fibres allow the feet to breathe - natural fibres such as cotton, wool and bamboo are great for your feet.

Socks with materials such as polypropylene wick away sweat, reducing moisture levels, thereby reducing any chances of rubbing and subsequent development of areas of hard skin.

Socks add an extra layer between the skin and the shoe, preventing blistering and chafing of the skin

So, there you go, with all bases covered, moisturising every day, filing weekly and wearing the correct footwear and socks, your feet are sure to feel like heaven in no time.

If you are struggling to keep on top of the build-up, come in to make an appointment to have the hard skin and corns paired away, and get your feet back in shape.

Hard skin and corns are common foot conditions I treat in my clinic every day, so don't be embarrassed to call. To find out more, call now on 07988 916 198 or [book online](#).

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I now run a virtual podiatry clinic taking [video consultations](#), if you prefer this option for an initial consult, call or book online to make an appointment.



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