



Healthy Feet Survey 2017

Commissioned by:



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Feet are an incredibly important and complex component of our anatomy, comprised of many small bones, muscles, ligaments, tendons and other structures. They not only bear the weight of our body, but they also allow us to be mobile.

Despite their significant role in our overall health and lifestyle, Australians have a lot to answer for when it comes to looking after their feet.

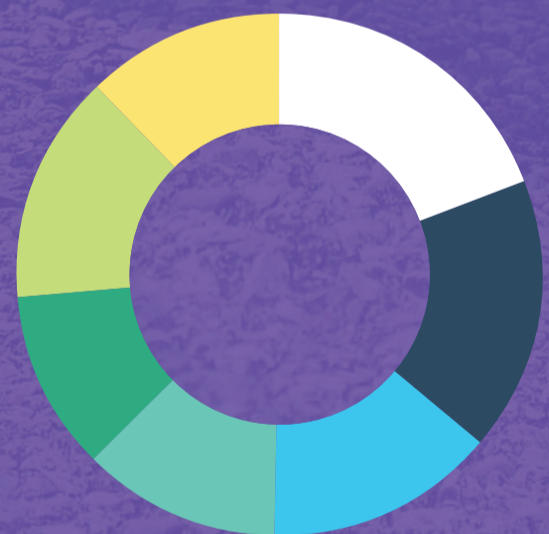
Occupation, age, footwear choices and exercise all impact our feet – yet many people ignore the signs and symptoms of conditions and continue with behaviours that put them at risk of developing unhealthy feet.

As Australia’s largest and most trusted group of podiatrists, My FootDr and Balance Podiatry wanted to better understand the behaviours behind how Australians look after their feet and overcome these challenges through education.

The inaugural 2017 Healthy Feet Survey reveals just how big Australia’s foot problem is and identifies the barriers preventing people from seeking professional help. It also lifts the lid on some of the fundamental awareness issues with podiatry as an allied health service.



| | |
|-------|-----|
| Men | 55% |
| Women | 45% |



| | |
|-------|-----|
| 30-34 | 19% |
| 35-39 | 17% |
| 40-44 | 14% |
| 45-49 | 12% |
| 50-54 | 11% |
| 55-59 | 14% |
| 60-64 | 12% |

ABOUT THE SURVEY

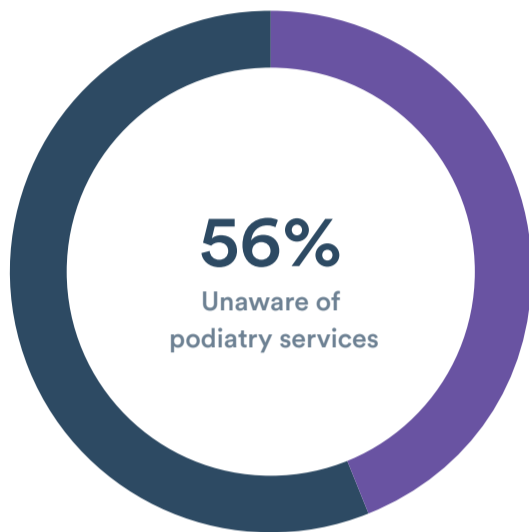
The research was commissioned by My FootDr and Balance Podiatry and undertaken by Pureprofile in April 2017. 500 Australians aged between 30 and 65 participated in the survey, with a proportional representation of participants from each state and territory.

Podiatry Awareness

Healthy Feet Survey 2017

1 AWARENESS

Do you know what professional services a podiatrist offers?



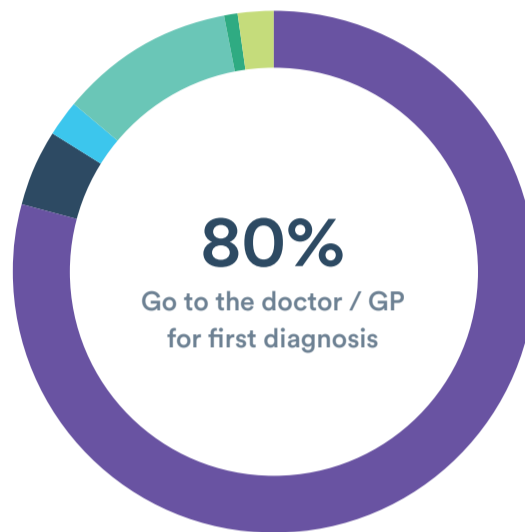
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|-----|-----|
| Yes | 44% |
| No | 56% |

While podiatry has been recognised as a specialist allied health profession in Australia for more than 45 years, a distinct lack of awareness still exists among most Australians about what health services podiatry offers.

Just 44 per cent of people surveyed said they knew what a podiatrist does.

2 DIAGNOSIS

If you were to experience pain in your foot or lower leg, which health practitioner would you seek assistance from first?



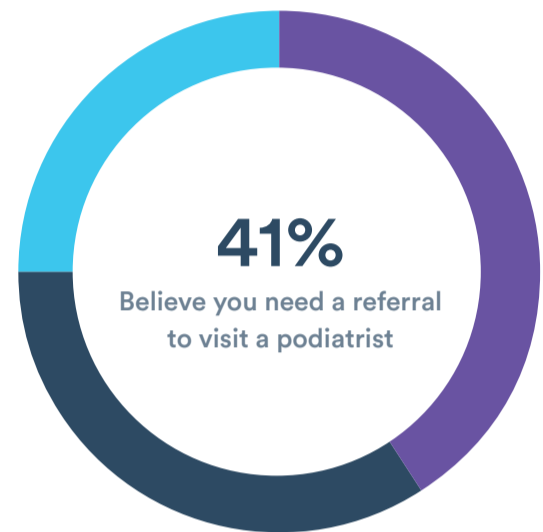
| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| Doctor / GP | 80% |
| Physiotherapist | 5% |
| Chiropractor | 2% |
| Podiatrist | 11% |
| Pharmacist | 1% |
| Other | 2% |

When it comes to seeking a diagnosis on a foot or lower leg condition, just 11 per cent of respondents said they would visit a podiatrist as the first port of call.

Instead, Australians are consulting their general practitioners (GP). The majority (80%) of respondents said they would first turn to a doctor, with 5 per cent choosing a physiotherapist.

3 GP REFERRALS

Do you think you need a referral from a GP to visit a podiatrist?



| | |
|--------|-----|
| Yes | 41% |
| No | 34% |
| Unsure | 25% |

One reason respondents may be turning to their GP first is because they believe a referral is required to visit a podiatrist.

41 per cent of those surveyed thought they needed a referral, with just 1 in 3 (34 per cent) knowing it wasn't necessary. The remainder of people were unsure if a referral was required.

53%

Podiatry is covered under most health insurance policies. More than half of respondents had health insurance with extras.

A podiatrist wearing glasses and a white coat is examining a patient's foot. The patient is sitting in a blue medical chair. The podiatrist is holding a black foot pad or sensor against the patient's foot. The background is a clinical setting with a white wall and a blue chair.

FAST FACT:

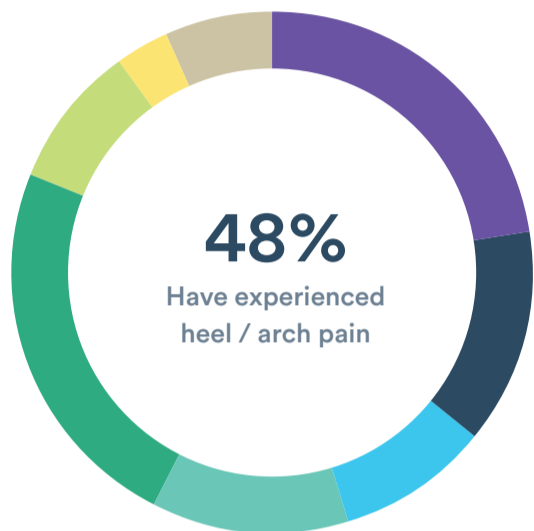
Podiatry is the only health profession entirely devoted to the study, diagnosis, and treatment of disorders of the foot, ankle and lower extremity.

Australia's Foot Problem

Healthy Feet Survey 2017

1 COMMON CONDITIONS

Most common foot conditions experienced

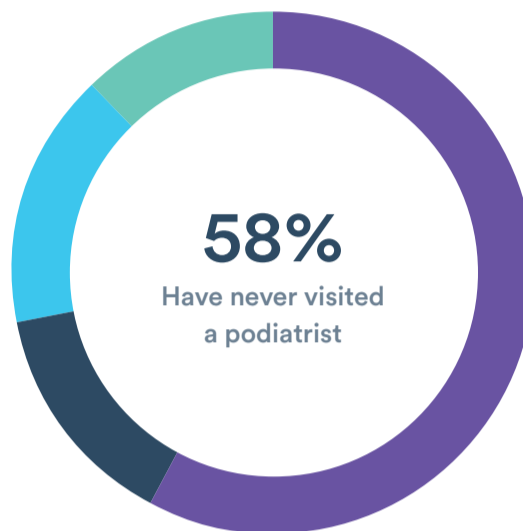


| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Heel or arch pain | 48% |
| Infected toenails | 28% |
| Toenail fungus | 20% |
| Corns and calluses | 26% |
| Sore legs/muscles | 50% |
| Shin splints | 19% |
| Bunions/Hammertoe | 7% |
| Other | 14% |

Heel or arch pain is the most common type of foot condition Australians experience, according to the study. Almost 1 in 2 (48%) of those surveyed indicated they had experienced this condition, with 35 per cent experiencing it as recent as in the past 12 months. Ingrown or infected toenails (28%), corns and calluses (26%) and shin splints (19%) were among the other common foot and lower leg conditions experienced.

2 PODIATRY VISITATION

When did you last visit a podiatrist?



| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Never | 58% |
| In the last 12 months | 14% |
| More than 12 months | 16% |
| Not since I was a child | 12% |

Despite a high incidence of these common foot problems, a staggering 58 per cent of those surveyed had never visited a podiatrist.

Just 14 per cent had made a trip to their podiatrist in the past 12 months.

3 LIFESTYLE FACTORS

How often do you wake up with sore feet (heel, arch or foot pain)?



| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Every day | 6% |
| Most mornings (4-7 days) | 7% |
| Some mornings (1-3 days) | 36% |
| I don't have foot pain | 52% |

Our demanding lifestyles are also impacting our foot health. 53 per cent of those surveyed said they had experienced sore feet after exercise in the last 12 months. 51 per cent experienced similar pain after work in the same period.

These factors, among others, contributed to an alarming 6 per cent of people indicating that they wake up with heel or arch pain every morning. A further 43 per cent experienced morning foot pain at least once a week, meaning almost 1 in 2 Australians wake up with sore feet every week.

Foot, arch or heel pain isn't something that disappears overnight. You may be waking up with one of the most common causes of foot and heel pain in adults – plantar fasciitis. Treating it could be as simple as making a change to your footwear or getting a prescription for custom-made orthotic shoe inserts.

A man and a woman are jogging together in a park. The man is wearing a blue athletic shirt and white shorts, while the woman is wearing a light-colored top and grey pants. They are both smiling and appear to be in good health. The background shows lush green trees and a clear sky.

FAST FACT:

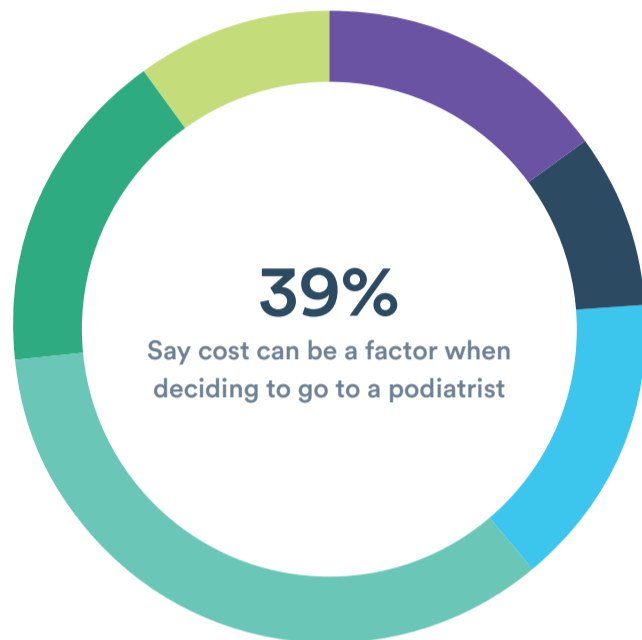
Almost 1 in 2 Australians wake up with foot pain at least once a week. Lifestyle factors including exercise and work environment are key factors impacting foot health.

Stepping Over The Barriers

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1 TAKING THE FIRST STEP

Which of the following reasons might prevent you from visiting a podiatrist to treat a foot or lower leg condition?



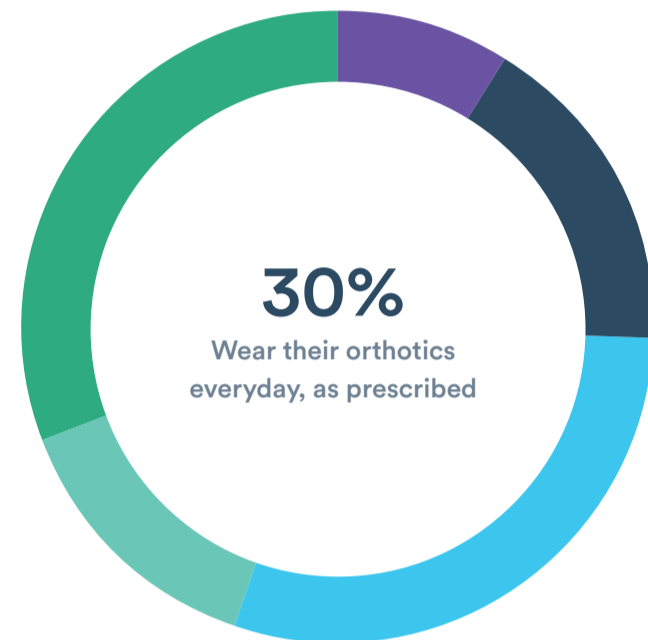
| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| I prefer to self-manage my condition | 17% |
| My condition is embarrassing | 10% |
| I don't have private health insurance | 17% |
| I'm not sure of the costs involved | 39% |
| Unaware of how a podiatrist can help | 19% |
| Demanding work life schedule | 11% |

With many Australians living with common foot conditions, respondents were also asked about the potential barriers preventing them from seeking assistance from a podiatrist. Lack of awareness remained a common factor, but other perceived concerns were also revealed.

More than a third (39%) said uncertainty about the costs involved to visit a podiatrist and 17 per cent said having no health insurance might be factors preventing them from consulting a podiatrist. Preferring to self-manage their condition was also a common response (17%) and 1 in 10 said an embarrassing condition might also prevent them from seeking professional help.

2 TROUBLE FINDING THE GROOVE

If you have prescription orthotics, how often do you wear them?




| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Some days (1-3 days per week) | 9% |
| Most days (4-7 days per week) | 17% |
| Every day as prescribed | 30% |
| With my work or sports shoes only | 19% |
| Never | 11% |

Custom-made foot orthotics (or shoe inserts) are commonly prescribed to prevent or curb foot pain, however it was discovered that those who have them may not be wearing them properly.

While 30 per cent of people who have been prescribed orthotics said they wore them every day, the same percentage also never wore them. Orthotics should be worn with every pair of shoes, including work and exercise shoes, in order to provide feet with the appropriate level of support for each type of footwear.



Just 66% of people know what foot orthotics are, despite their importance in preventing heel and arch pain.

A podiatrist in a light blue shirt and glasses is kneeling on the left, adjusting a camera on a tripod. A patient in a white shirt and blue jeans is walking on a treadmill in the center. The treadmill has 'FREEMORM' written on it. The scene is set in a clinical or laboratory environment with a plain white wall.

FAST FACT:

How you walk means a lot to a podiatrist. A gait analysis is one of the many tools used to diagnose and treat foot problems.

Finding The Right Fit

Healthy Feet Survey 2017

1 THE SHOE DOESN'T ALWAYS FIT

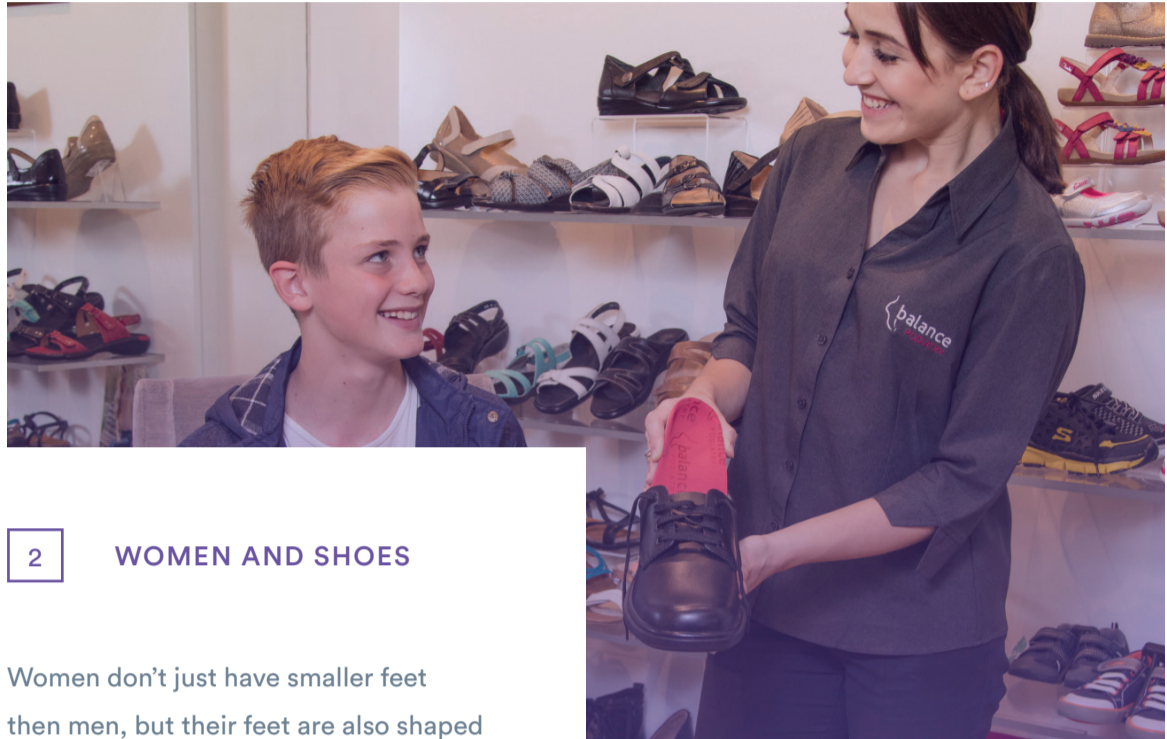
What is the most important factor to you when purchasing shoes?



| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Style/ how they look | 16% |
| Price/ affordability | 27% |
| Comfort/ fit | 55% |
| Brand/ reputation | 1% |

Just 11 per cent of people surveyed indicated that they had their foot professionally measured in the past 12 months, suggesting most Australians may be wearing shoes inappropriate for work, general wear or exercise.

Ongoing use of ill-fitting shoes can lead to gradual development of a range of preventable foot and lower leg conditions. While 55 per cent of respondents rated finding a proper fit as the most important factor when purchasing footwear, 51 per cent also admitted to forgoing comfort and health for style and price.



2 WOMEN AND SHOES

Women don't just have smaller feet than men, but their feet are also shaped differently. Typically women have a wider forefoot, shorter metatarsals and a narrower heel. Their joint range of motion is also greater and this can lead to sprains and overuse injuries.

While most men purchase shoes that fit their feet properly, women are often conscious of their feet being petite in the toe-box area. The research revealed almost two thirds (64%) of women surveyed had purchased shoes for style or affordability over comfort. Wearing shoes that are narrow and tight around the big toe or forefoot can induce problems like bunions, hammertoes, corns between toes and pinched nerves. High heels can also increase the risk of developing muscle and joint pain in the leg and lower back.

Wearing shoes that angle the foot differently over the life of a corporate women's career, or even over a few years, can lead to permanent damage such as arthritis.

64%

women have purchased shoes for style over comfort

3 IDENTIFYING THE SIGNS

The skin mirrors what is occurring in the structure underneath it.

One of the first signs of inappropriate footwear is developing calluses or corns, in particular under the ball of the foot. 28 per cent of women surveyed said they had experienced these conditions.

Family history can also influence foot health. Observing irregular conditions can help to identify potential problems.

89%

Most Australians haven't had their foot professionally measured in the past 12 months, meaning they may be wearing appropriate footwear for their feet.



28%

of people surveyed had experienced fungal nails

1 LASER THERAPY

Technology has advanced podiatry as a specialty health profession. Leading clinics now use video walking analysis and 3D foot scans during physical assessments to help diagnose a variety of complex conditions.

New treatments are also available for common diseases such as fungal nails. While more than a quarter (28%) of people surveyed had experienced this condition, most used paint-on treatments (60%) or oral medication (21%) to manage it.

Just 12 per cent of respondents knew laser therapy, the fastest treatment, was available, with 3 per cent saying they had used it to treat their condition.

2 VIDEO TECHNOLOGY

There are three basic stages to the human gait cycle - heel strike, stance phase and toe off phase.

With computerised video walking (gait) analysis, podiatrists are able to break each second of the gait cycle into tiny segments (frames), allowing a detailed assessment of foot position and overall posture.

Without this technology it is impossible to view the detail of this intricate motion. Video walking technology is particularly useful to diagnose conditions associated with running or sport, as well as painful foot and leg conditions.

3 3D PRINTED ORTHOTICS

Foot orthotics help to improve the alignment of feet, and provide support and cushioning, to reduce or stop foot, ankle, knee and lower back pain.

However, every foot is different and the more accurate an orthotic matches a foot contour, the better the medical results.

3D printing technology gives podiatrists the ability to adjust the thickness and rigidity of the material at any area of the orthotic according to the patients needs - and it offers a lighter, thinner and more durable orthotic compared to traditional plastic inserts.

83%

Industry research shows 83%* of patients are cured of fungal nail disease after three laser treatments.

*Source: Novel Laser Therapy Treatment on Onychomycosis, Journal of the Laser and Health Academy 2010.

Thank you for helping to bridge the information gap on foot health.

The inaugural 2017 Healthy Feet Survey has revealed that while many Australians experience some form of foot condition or pain in their lifetime, there exists a distinct lack of awareness around proper care of feet and the importance of visiting a podiatrist regularly.

Feet are a foundation for your body and overall wellbeing and taking them for granted could lead to permanent changes such as arthritis or conditions in other parts of your body.

Stomping out bad habits requires adopting a wellness and preventative approach to foot health, like visiting a dentist regularly to ensure teeth remain healthy.

Demanding work and social lives put our feet under enormous pressure but a simple change in style of shoe, or a custom orthotic insert, may be all that is needed to ensure feet remain healthy.

Ask yourself: When did you last get your feet assessed?

THE PODIATRISTS BEHIND THE REPORT

My FootDr is Australia's largest podiatry group with a team of more than 200 highly skilled and experienced podiatrists and support staff helping patients maintain healthy feet across 28 clinics nationally. Each clinic is equipped with state of the art podiatry equipment, taking a sophisticated, modern and digital approach to delivering world-class podiatry care.

Balance Podiatry is Australia's second largest podiatry group, with 12 podiatry clinics and footwear retail stores across the country. Balance Podiatry embraces innovative technologies to offer a broad scope of podiatry services including laser therapy for fungal nails, custom orthotics, orthotic-friendly footwear and general treatments.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

myfootdr.com.au | balancepodiatry.com.au

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