

Smelly feet are not fun for anyone

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By Brighton Chireka

Smelly feet are not fun for anyone but there is no need to worry as it can be prevented. Most of us have had smelly feet at one point in our lives. We know how annoying or embarrassing it can be. Be it in the bus , commuter omnibus or a public gathering smelly feet can be off-putting. Any foot movement can let the bad odour out of the shoes. I can remember at high school having smelly feet and not knowing what to do. Shoes will have to be left outside overnight as the smell would stop anyone from sleeping. Lack of knowledge made me worry a lot and lose my confidence but now it's over and can share the wisdom. They say sharing is caring especially when it involves getting rid of smelly feet. It is my wish that no one should have to be stressed about this problem as there are effective , simple and cheap ways of dealing with this problem.

What causes smelly feet?

The main cause for smelly feet is combination of wearing the same shoes every day and sweaty feet.

The next question to ask is, "Why do feet sweat?"

We all can get sweaty feet regardless of temperature or time of the year. But teenagers and pregnant women are especially prone because hormonal changes make them sweat more. This is the main reason why I had the problem when I was a teenager.

One is likely to have foot sweating if they are on their feet all day. Being under a lot of stress can make one sweat a lot. Another medical condition called hyperhidrosis make people sweat more than usual and the feet are not spared.

Another notorious culprit is fungal infection , such as athlete's foot that can lead to bad foot odour.

Lets look at a typical scenario which many us can relate to

Our feet sweat into our shoes all day so they get damp and bacteria start to grow. The bacteria continue to breed even when we take off our shoes. This is especially if we put the shoes in a dark cupboard (trying to "hide the odour"). Then , when we put them on the next day , even if we just had shower, putting our feet into still damp shoes creates the perfect environment for bacteria to flourish. That environment is one that is warm, moist and dark. Bacteria on the skin break down sweat as it comes from the pores. A cheesy odour is released as the sweat decomposes.

I have smelly feet so how can I get rid of the smell?

I am glad you asked as we have simple, quick solution to smelly feet. First we need to make sure that it's not fungal infection (athlete's foot) as the treatment is different but prevention is the same. I will cover athlete's feet below.

[ATHLETE'S FOOT](#)

Treatment of smelly feet

The advice is to clean the feet with an antibacterial soap. There are lots of over the counter foot hygiene products at your local pharmacy. I would recommend Hibiscrub as it is the best. Leave on the Hibiscrub for a couple of minutes , then wash it off. Do this twice a day for a week and you will say goodbye to smelly feet. Please do not use Hibiscrub on your feet if you have broken skin, such as eczema.

Presentation is better than cure and it's cheaper. In view of that how do we prevent smelly feet?

Preventing smelly feet

This calls for good personal hygiene and it's not rocket science. Here are the tips for you :

Never wear the same pair of shoes two days in a row. It is advisable to wear different shoes on successive days so they have at least 24 hours to dry out.

Make sure teenage boys have two pairs of trainers so that they don't have to wear the same pair for two or more consecutive days. (remember that they sweat a lot).

Wash and dry your feet every day and change your socks (ideally wool or cotton, not nylon) at least once a day. I repeat do not wear socks for more than a day please.

Keep your toenails short and clean and remove any hard skin with a foot file. Hard skin can become soggy when damp, which provides an ideal home for bacteria. Men nowadays can go for a pedicure and there is nothing unusual about it . I know these days world over men can now get private and discrete pedicure away from the public. Even in Harare I know two "posh" places where men can get a good private pedicure. Not to advertise any place but I had the pleasure of having pedicure in Bumi Hills, Sam Levy Village Borrowdale Harare , Joina City in the City Centre of Harare and several places in London not forgetting at home by my better half.

For those that sweat a lot and have sweat feet, it's a good idea to:

1-Dab between your toes with cotton wool dipped in surgical spirit after a shower or bath – surgical spirit helps dry out the skin between the toes really well – in addition to drying them with a towel.

2-Use a spray deodorant or antiperspirant on your feet – a normal underarm deodorant or antiperspirant works just as well as a specialist foot product and will cost you less.

3- Put medicated insoles, which have a deodorising effect, in your shoes

4-Try feet-fresh socks – some sports socks have ventilation panels to keep feet dry, and antibacterial socks are impregnated with chemicals to discourage the odour-producing bacteria that

feed on sweat

5- Wear leather or canvas shoes, as they let your feet breathe, unlike plastic ones

6- Wear open-toed sandals in summer and go barefoot at home in the evenings

When should you see a doctor?

These articles are mainly for information purposes and are not supposed to be used to diagnose anyone without seeing a doctor. However, smelly feet are a harmless problem that generally clears up with simple measures mentioned above. Sometimes, however, it can be a sign of a medical condition. I urge you to see your doctor if simple measures to reduce your foot odour don't help, or if you're worried that your level of sweating is abnormally high.

This article was compiled by Dr Brighton Chireka who is a GP and a Health Commissioner in South Kent Coast in the United Kingdom. You can contact him at: info@docbeecee.co.uk and can read more of his work on his blog at [DR CHIREKA'S BLOG](#)

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