

Give your *feet* a break this summer



M. Taufiq Khan advises on the treatment of common conditions which beset an often neglected area of our bodies

The touch of sun and air on the body are life-enhancing joys of summer but sadly for many people not so far as the feet are concerned. All too often these passports to mobility and all this brings in life enrichment are kept hidden away because the owner is ashamed of them. Sick feet – tired, aching, infected, inflamed, swollen or otherwise distorted – take the pleasure out of life, affecting health and well-being to a greater or lesser degree.

It is possible to predict that over 50 per cent of the population will suffer from at least one kind of foot problem or another during their lifetime. Foot disorders affecting the skin, bones and nails come in many forms. Some are due to systemic causes; for example, circulatory problems affect the feet and lower limbs just as other parts of the body, as sufferers from cold feet and chilblains are all too aware.

Homeopathic podiatry

More and more people who have had discouraging results from other treatments are turning to homeopathic podiatry, a complementary speciality which includes, as first line treatment, Marigold

Therapy phytomedicine applied topically in conjunction with podiatric techniques and, when indicated according to the signs and symptoms, homeopathic oral medicine. As in dentistry, the use of homeopathy in podiatry is more limited than in medicine.

It was experience of the limitations of homeopathy in treating numerous podiatric disorders, especially those on weight-bearing areas, which led to the research and discovery of Marigold Therapy. Its extensive use in both NHS and private practice has shown Marigold Therapy to be speedier in action and more effective than homeopathy alone for many common foot problems. Its unique formulations incorporate species of the Marigold genus and other medicinal plants, according to the desired therapeutic action, eg keralytic, anti-inflammatory, anti-viral, anti-fungal or anti-bacterial. Suitable for people of all ages, its gentle, non-invasive nature makes it attractive to patients and helpful for people “at risk” for whom invasive treatments are contra-indicated.

Beneficial long-term results can be achieved with

homeopathic podiatry, which is used to treat a wide range of disorders affecting the skin, bones and nails of the feet, including the following common disorders.

Bunion

The disfiguring bunion can be due to heredity but wrongly shaped footwear is the most frequent cause. Constant pressure on the big toe joint produces inflammation with consequent pain and stiffness, swelling of the soft tissues and enlargement of the joint. The usual advice is for an operation but, despite the prescribed long rest after surgery, many people experience complications, a painful scar and inflamed foot being common.

In homeopathic podiatry the first line of treatment is Marigold Therapy medication for bunion applied within a cavity pad over the bunion joint once weekly for three to four weeks according to the clinician's judgment. This is followed by some months of home treatment using the prescribed tincture and oil, simple exercises and footbaths. Homeopathic medicines, prescribed according to the signs and symptoms in the

treatment of bunion, include Arnica, Rhus tox and Ruta.

Corns

Corns of one kind or another can develop on any part of the foot as a result of constant, excessive pressure and friction. Callosities usually develop on the ball of the foot. Marigold Therapy medication for corn/callus is applied within a cavity pad over the corn/callus once weekly for two to four weeks. This is followed by regular use of the prescribed tincture and oil. Homeopathic medicines, prescribed according to the signs and symptoms, include Ant crud and Arnica.

Fungal infection of nails

Thickened, distorted and discoloured nails may be due to injury or fungal infection. As a preliminary to the application of Marigold Therapy tincture and oil to the affected nails, they should be filed by a chiropodist/podiatrist to allow the medication to penetrate to the affected part. Homeopathic remedies, prescribed according to the signs and symptoms (in addition to Marigold Therapy), are Silicea, Thuja and Ant crud. Resolution may take some months.

Athlete's foot

Skin infections find a very favourable environment in the footwear favoured by millions today – trainers – over-used, under-aired and never disinfected. The highly infectious condition of athlete's foot is characterised by moist, broken skin when between the toes and an unpleasant smell and itching. When on the ball of the foot, it causes the skin to peel; on the heel it creates deep painful fissures that can sometimes bleed.

Marigold Therapy tincture and oil for athlete's foot is used and homeopathic

remedies, prescribed according to the signs and symptoms, include Silicea, Baryta carb and Sulphur.

Verruca

A verruca, caused by a viral infection, is a very common skin problem and a hazard for the growing number of people using communal areas such as swimming baths, sports and health clubs.

Marigold Therapy for verruca is applied within a cavity pad once weekly, two to four times according to the clinician's judgment. This is followed up using the prescribed tincture and oil. The speed of response to Marigold Therapy for verruca is affected by the state of the person's immune system. Homeopathic medicines include Ant crud, Causticum and Nit ac.

Everyday basic foot care

- Wash feet every day and dry thoroughly especially between the toes. Keep an eye open for the start of any possible problem as that is the time to begin remedial action.
- Gently massage the feet every day or, failing that, every other day, with a suitable natural oil or unmedicated cream. Marigold (Tagetes) Cream, used in Marigold Therapy is a popular choice for many.
- Every day wear clean socks or tights.
- Once a week give your feet a warm salt bath for ten minutes, a tablespoon of salt to a bowl of water.

Footwear

Do not wear the same shoes day in, day out. Choose footwear that fits well and supports the foot. Alternate the shoes you wear as much as possible, certainly every other day.

Care of the growing foot

Every day when the child is bathed, examine the feet carefully for any incipient problems and raise any concerns at the family health clinic. It is important for abnormalities to be corrected at an early age if possible. When the child begins to walk the feet should also be examined by a podiatrist who will advise on the best type of footwear for the growing foot. If in early teens the child is influenced by peer pressure to choose unsuitable shoes either to increase height or for reasons of fashion, a tendency to depressed or high arches needs particular attention. It is at this time that the seeds of serious problems can be sown.

How to obtain homeopathic podiatry

Under the NHS by GP referral at the Department of Homoeopathic Podiatry, The Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital.

By private appointment from podiatrists trained in the specialty; phone the BHA to find someone in your area.

Information about Marigold Therapy can be obtained by sending an sae to Dr M. Taufiq Khan, Department of Homoeopathic Podiatry, The Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital, Greenwell Street, London W1W 5BP.



Photo courtesy of Jump2



Dr M. Taufiq Khan MSc, PhD(London), MChS, LFHom(Pod), FBAHChP, FLS, is Hon Director of Homoeopathic Podiatry Services at the RLHH. In 2001 he was short-listed for the Awards for Good Practice in Integrated Healthcare of the Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Medicine for his pioneer research and development of Marigold Therapy for foot disorders.