

Podiatrist offers tips for teachers to put their best foot forward this school year

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Students aren't the only ones heading back to school, and according to a podiatrist at Baylor College of Medicine, teachers should be sure to include comfortable shoes on their shopping lists.

"Activity levels of teachers during the summer break can vary – some are less active during the summer months than during the school year, and this can be a factor in getting back into the swing of things," said Dr. Ronald Lepow, assistant professor of orthopedic surgery at Baylor. "For those who stayed active, their routine will not be too different in the fall, but there may be an adjustment period for those who were less active."

Lepow suggests that both male and female teachers look for shoes that are wide enough for their foot and deep enough in the toe area so that their toes can move around unencumbered. Shoes should support the arch and have a firm heel counter so the heel does not slip around in the shoe. Open back or sling back shoes are not as supportive. If teachers are allowed to wear a more casual shoe, Lepow suggests an athletic shoe.

If shoes do not offer adequate support, there are over-the-counter arch support products available as well as custom-designed orthotics through a podiatrist.

Common problems related to unsupportive shoes include plantar fasciitis, or pain on the bottom of the foot, and Achilles tendonitis, pain in the back of the heel.

"If you have gone from a period of relative inactivity to being on your feet for seven hours a day, you might develop one of these conditions," Lepow said.

Lepow suggests stretching exercises to help relieve the pain. Soaking feet in a whirlpool at the end of the day also can help relax the muscles.

If these problems are prolonged and are not relieved by conservative techniques, Lepow suggests seeing a podiatrist to see if a more aggressive treatment or physical therapy is appropriate.

Another common problem can be excessive perspiration, which can lead to athlete's foot. Lepow said to use a good foot powder to prevent perspiration and suggests not wearing the same shoe every day. Use a shoe tree and alternate your shoes every third day to give the inside of the [shoe](#) time to dry out. If this doesn't work, try using an antiperspirant on the bottom of the feet each day.

To treat athlete's [foot](#), it's important to determine what type it is. Different over-the-counter products are available for dry, scaly skin versus red, hot and swollen skin on the feet.

For students who are heading back to school, Lepow also suggests purchasing supportive shoes that are well-suited for school-day activities rather than sandals or flip-flops.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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