

Tips Can Help Keep Feet Comfy All Winter

A Berkley podiatrist urges residents to listen to their bodies — and avoid going barefoot.

By [Megan Swoyer](#) | www.patch.com Saturday, December 4, 2010

Long shopping lines, slushy streets, low humidity, rocking around the Christmas tree, high-heeled shoes, heavy shopping bags, tired children whining, "carry me!" – ahhh, 'tis the season that can be oh-so-hard on our feet.

But with a little common sense and a few smart decisions, we can give our tootsies the gift of good health.

Dr. Michael Schey, a podiatrist at [NorthPointe Foot & Ankle](#) in Berkley, sat down with Patch reporter Megan Swoyer to share ideas on how we can put our best foot forward when it comes to heel, toe and ankle health during the busy season.

Schey, who has served as president of the Michigan State Podiatric Medical Association and as chairman of the Michigan Board of Podiatric Medicine and Surgery, said, in a nutshell, "Respect your body."

Huntington Woods-Berkley Patch: What are the keys to ensuring our feet will be able to withstand extended shopping periods?

Dr. Michael Schey: We're not meant to stand on cement. And lugging packages and schlepping children challenge our structure. People should wear shoes appropriate for the task. For shopping, consider shoes with shock absorption, arch support and breathable materials, which are all key to foot health.

Patch: I just bought a sweet pair of flats with a little wedge that I really like. But they are killing my feet. Should I give them more time? When should we consider no longer wearing a certain type of shoe?

Schey: Listen to your body. If your feet hurt, then they're telling you these particular shoes aren't working. However, if you have diabetes or other neurological diseases, your feet and brain do not communicate well, and you'll need to plan and take preventive steps to avoid injury. Diabetic neuropathy patients should wear shock-absorbing shoes and limit their standing and walking to what's comfortable and safe.

Patch: I have a packed social schedule this month and like to wear heels when at a festive occasion. Do women's shoe styles (high heels, pointy toes, etc.) make women more prone to foot and ankle injuries?

Schey: Yes. A favorite scenario involves my own daughter. She came in with pain, and she wears pointed boots (from the tip of her toe to the tip of her boot, there's like a 4-inch gap!) with 3-inch heels. And she wanted to know why her feet were sore.

Patch: To help prevent foot injuries and health issues, should one invest in expensive footwear? Should I get out of Famous Footwear and over to Stuart Weitzman?

Schey: It doesn't matter how much you spend on shoes. Quality and fit is not measured in dollars.

Patch: What are some of the worst shoes or boots people subject their feet to?

Schey: Those fashionable rubber boots for gardening and rain. The materials don't breathe. Wearing those is like putting your feet in a plastic bag.

Patch: How about Crocs? How do they measure up?

Schey: Many of their styles have holes, and that's good. I'm not against them around home, as they do offer some protection, and that's better than going barefoot.

Patch: If you were heading to the mall to shop today and knew you'd be on your feet for a long time, what shoes would you wear?

Schey: My black-leather SAS shoes. SAS makes an all-around good, reliable shoe. I've walked 25 miles in a SAS loafer. They do well for me. Another great walking shoe is Brooks Addiction walker.

Patch: What's the best type of boot for traipsing through slush and snow?

Schey: Be sure your boots are insulated and waterproof. Even if the boot maker says the boots are waterproof, I'd still treat it with a waterproofing product. The body has to work harder to compensate for moisture, so you want to minimize as much moisture to your foot as possible.

Patch: Many people get cracked heels during the winter. Why, and what's a good product to combat dryness?

Schey: There's less humidity in the air, so it's a lot drier. And when our feet are exposed to colder temperatures, they don't hydrate as well. Eucerin moisturizers are a good, inexpensive starting point for treatment. If you have cracks and fissures, you will need more professional assistance.

Patch: After a long day at the mall, I just want to walk around barefoot when I get home. Is this a good idea?

Schey: Your home is dry. When you walk on carpet fibers, you get microscopic cuts in the bottom of your feet. Those can get worse and worse. You should wear socks and slippers when at home. The foot is deaf, dumb and blind. It doesn't know if you're walking in the mall or the bedroom. It needs protection everywhere.