

Calluses

Milton J. Stern, DPM



Calluses on the bottom of the foot are about as common as any condition we see on the foot. Years ago, we used to judge a man's working ability or performance by the condition of his hands. It was quite simple, a good hard worker had callused hands and as for his feet, they just weren't part of the job interview. Calluses, like corns, are thickened layers of skin, which are nature's response to excessive friction and pressure. Initially, a hot spot or blister may be present but if the pressure continues, a callus will often form. These lesions will usually form

beneath weight bearing, bony segments of the foot. Characteristically this includes the metatarsal heads or ball of the foot, the heel, and the under surface of certain toes. Contrary to frequent belief, calluses do not grow and spread by any living intention. However, they are capable of involving adjacent skin areas as a result of continued friction and pressure characteristic of certain areas of the foot.

Not all calluses cause discomfort. A callus may be small, medium, or large in area but thin and diffuse in thickness. These are normally nonpainful and can be effectively dealt with by padding, **orthotics**, and certain types of abrasive treatment procedures. On the other hand, calluses may become deep and punctuate with circular type cores in their center. These are the ones that can indeed cause grief and most often will lead to a visit at the local foot doctor's office. This painful type of callus may be due to an underlying problem in bone structure, a particular type of skin condition, or perhaps a response to a foreign body. Various treatment methods are available that are geared towards re-establishing proper balance and weight distribution. As with many problems of the foot one could try to accommodate these lesions with padding, try to control foot strike and function by an orthotic with a metatarsal pad and accommodation around the painful areas or correct the orthopedic condition that exists.