



# Cracks in the Foundation

Although dry, cracked heels (a.k.a. heel fissures) can strike any time of year, they are egged on by winter's dry air. No one is immune, but older people and those with diabetes or thyroid issues are more vulnerable.

The soles of the feet (and palms of the hands) have plenty of sweat glands but lack the sebaceous glands that the rest of our skin has. Sebaceous glands, typically associated with hair follicles, produce and secrete sebum, an oily substance that helps keep skin soft and moist.

Besides dry air, other factors contribute to cracked heels:

- harsh, non-moisturizing soap
- baths and showers that are too hot
- standing for long stretches on hard floors
- hormonal imbalances
- poor diet and lack of hydration
- skin conditions such as eczema and athlete's foot
- aging (the skin loses moisture as we get older)
- obesity (expanded skin on the soles may crack)

Symptoms of cracked heels include peeling skin, red or flaky patches, itchiness, pain, and bleeding. Cracked heels are unattractive, too, but more concerning is the potential for infection (made worse by diabetes and circulatory issues).

To treat or prevent cracked heels, dry your feet thoroughly following a bath, shower, or foot soak. Then utilize a pumice stone to gently remove the buildup of calluses (never use any kind of blade!). Moisturize your heels twice daily, and use an exfoliating lotion once per week. When moisturizing prior to bedtime — or using a mentholated rub (e.g., Vicks VapoRub), which contains many essential oils — wear a fresh pair of cotton socks overnight.

For stubborn, entrenched cases, we can help you by removing callused skin, treating underlying infection, and offering recommendations on self-care.

## About the Doctor

**Lucy Meier, DPM**



Dr. Lucy Meier is a board-certified podiatrist who serves patients with great enthusiasm

from our offices in

Oak Creek and New Berlin. She enjoys treating patients of all ages using both conservative and surgical techniques. Dr. Meier specializes in treating heel pain, ingrown toenails, and other skin and nail conditions. She also enjoys teaching young physicians in-training and students from local colleges and serves as the assistant director of the Ascension Hospital Foot and Ankle Surgery program. Dr. Meier and her staff love providing a family-type doctor's office environment just like the old days.





# New Year's Resolutions Don't Need to Be Fancy

A New Year's resolution to drop excess weight might seem boring or cliché, but it truly is one of the best things a person can do for themselves ... provided they follow through. As of 2018 CDC statistics, more than two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese.

Carrying extra poundage often has major consequences for feet and ankles. It increases pressure and strain on the plantar fascia, the long ligament extending from the heel to the toes. In turn, the plantar fascia becomes inflamed (plantar fasciitis), painful, and persistent.

Extra pounds also cause one's center of gravity to shift, which places extra stress on new areas of the feet and ankles. Simple tasks like walking become uncomfortable ... and less simple. The door is open wider to stress fractures; falls and their associated injuries are more of a threat, too.

Overweight/obese people are at greater risk for flat feet and overpronation, which makes bunion development more likely. Many factors can hasten the arrival of a bunion, but excess weight belongs on the list.

People who are overweight are at serious risk of developing type 2 diabetes, which has a boatload of health consequences. For feet, diminished sensation, impaired healing, ulcers, infection, and possible amputation loom large.

Childhood obesity ramps up the potential for foot and ankle problems later in life. Kids are also at increased risk for stress fractures and Sever's disease, an inflammation of the growth plates in the heel.

We can help you with your weight-loss goals by diagnosing and treating your foot or ankle condition; providing guidance on stretching and exercise regimens; helping you select proper footwear; and prescribing orthotics when necessary. Give us a call today.

## Mark Your Calendars

- Jan. 1** New Year's Day: The Rose Parade, a tradition since 1890, is never held on a Sunday.
- Jan. 4** Trivia Day: An airplane's black box is actually orange (to aid its recovery after a crash).
- Jan. 12** Take the Stairs Day: The world's first public elevator was built in Manhattan in 1857.
- Jan. 16** Appreciate a Dragon Day: *Forbes* estimated Smaug's net worth at \$62 billion.
- Jan. 17** Martin Luther King Day: King enrolled at Morehouse College at the age of 15.
- Jan. 21** Squirrel Appreciation Day: A squirrel's front teeth never stop growing.
- Jan. 27** Chocolate Cake Day: Marie Antoinette never said, "Let them eat cake." A bum rap.





# Much More than Faithful Companions

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) classifies service dogs as working animals, not pets. But households who have one consider them part of the family, and then some. Per the ADA, a service dog "... is individually trained to work or perform tasks for a person with a disability."

Service dogs must be calm and highly adaptable; alert but not reactive; intelligent; reliable in performing a repetitive task; and possess a desire to please.

Many breeds make good service dogs, but German shepherds, Labrador retrievers, and golden retrievers lead the pack. Guide dogs, hearing dogs, medical-alert dogs, mobility dogs, and psychiatric dogs all provide invaluable services.

The ADA limits its scope of service animals to dogs, with one exception: miniature horses. Trained miniature horses match service dogs' abilities in many areas; live longer; don't shed as much; are easier to groom; don't get fleas; and provide an alternative when dogs are precluded for cultural or religious reasons.

There is no official certification for a trained service dog. The lack of regulation means you need to do your homework. Some service dog training organizations are superior to others.

Also, emotional-support dogs are **not** service dogs. They have not been trained for a specific task to help the disabled. Their mere presence is comforting to their owner. Service dogs are not required to wear a "Service Dog" vest or ID tag. In fact, many dogs wearing one are not service dogs.

The ADA grants service dogs access to all public accommodations, such as stores, restaurants, apartments, airlines, hospitals, etc. Unfortunately, some emotional-support dog owners claim their animals are service dogs (some with temperamental dispositions) to gain access to places from which they would otherwise be barred — an illegal act that can place the public and true service dogs at risk.



# Smothered Round Steak

Yield: 4 servings; Prep time: 15 mins.;  
Cook: 6–8 hrs.

*In honor of Martin Luther King Jr., we present this dish, which was reportedly among his favorites — Southern comfort food at its finest. It's also a slow-cooker recipe, so you can set it and forget it (well, at least for a few hours).*

## Ingredients

- 1½ lb. beef top round steak, cut into strips
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 1 large green pepper, sliced
- 1 can (14½ oz.) diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 jar (4 oz.) sliced mushrooms, drained
- 3 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- Hot cooked egg noodles (made separately from the slow cooker!)

## Directions

1. In a 3-qt. slow cooker, toss beef with flour, salt, and pepper. Stir in all remaining ingredients except the noodles.
2. Cook, covered, on low until meat is tender, 6–8 hours. When ready, serve with noodles.

Recipe courtesy of  
[www.tasteofhome.com](http://www.tasteofhome.com).



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See page one.

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# When the Ball of Your Foot Is Giving You Grief

Metatarsalgia is a general term that refers to pain in the ball of the foot, the area just behind the toes. This region is home to the metatarsophalangeal (MTP) joints, which is where the five long bones that run across the top of the foot (metatarsals) meet up with the toes.

When the MTP joints are exposed to excessive pressure, they can become inflamed and painful. One traumatic event can spur metatarsalgia, like a sharp spike in workout intensity or duration, but it typically develops gradually over time.

Metatarsalgia can manifest in several ways. Some people feel a sharp stabbing or burning pain. Pain may radiate from the ball of the foot to the toes and intensify when standing, walking, or running. Others experience numbness or tingling in the toes, or a sensation as if they were walking with a pebble in their shoe.

Running is a common cause of metatarsalgia, as are other sports that pound on the MTP joints, such as basketball or tennis. High heels, narrow-toed shoes, and shoes lacking adequate padding are guilty parties, too, as are other common foot conditions — for instance, hammertoes, bunions, high arches, calluses, arthritis ... and when the second toe is the longest toe. Thinned fat pads, which come with aging, and carrying excess weight can also overburden the MTP joints.

Metatarsalgia can disrupt one's quality of life, but the good news is that it can almost always be successfully treated with conservative measures.

If the ball of your foot is giving you grief, schedule an appointment with our office for a thorough evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment.

