

# WHAT IS A PODIATRIST?



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## WHAT IS A PODIATRIST?

Simply put, a podiatrist, or a doctor of podiatric medicine (DPM), is a doctor who specializes in

the diagnosis, care and treatment of the foot and ankle. Podiatrists are doctors who, after obtaining their undergraduate degrees, have attended four demanding years of school in podiatric medicine (the same length as other doctors), followed by three years as residents (in hospitals). During the four years of podiatric medical school, podiatry students undergo rigorous training, including an intense focus on the anatomy of the

foot and ankle. As residents, they are trained to perform surgery and specialized podiatric procedures. As professionals, they may further specialize in sports medicine, podiatric orthopedics, wound care, diabetic foot care, pediatrics or surgery.

Podiatrists are uniquely capable of caring for this critical part of the body. Your feet enable you to stand, walk, run, or dance for your entire life, and have to be cared for as much as any other body

part. Healthy feet are not only a key to success in the many jobs that require walking or standing all day, but are key to overall health. If your feet hurt, you can't walk properly and your whole body seems off. Remember that old children's song, "The foot bones connected to the shin bones, the shin bones connected to the thigh bones," etc.? It's true! Everything's connected.

Common complaints such as heel pain, bunions,

warts, or flat feet for example, can have the effects discussed above; they can cause pain, change the way you walk, make your usual shoes unbearable, or prevent you from standing at work. A podiatrist will not only treat these ills, but help patients learn how to care for their feet, recommend shoes better suited to the patient's feet and needs, or perhaps recommend inserts, (orthotics) or physical therapy. Doctors of podiatric medicine will work tirelessly to save the toes, feet and

legs of diabetics. They can also save lives; it was a podiatrist, Rep. Brad Wenstrup, who was the first to provide life-saving medical assistance to Rep. Steve Scalise after he was shot and severely wounded at a baseball practice in Washington in June.

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