



FOOT SENSE

A monthly newsletter from your podiatrist



Dr. Rion Berg

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How Hikers Can Avoid Toenail Problems

Whether you're a casual hiker or a hardcore trekker, nothing can ruin a great hike faster than a painful toenail. Whether you're hiking with your kids at Lake 22 or hiking around or climbing Mount Rainier your toenails can take a surprising amount of abuse.



Every summer we see hikers with painful toenail problems that could often have been avoided.

While black or damaged toenails can be seen as a badge of honor by some—they can be a harbinger of toenail loss or ingrown toenails and lead to longer term problems such as dystrophic or misshapen toenails and fungal toenails.

Fortunately, many of these problems can be avoided or greatly reduced by following some simple principles.

Purchase Boots That Fit Properly

Wearing boots that are too short, too long, or have too much volume are the number one reason for toenail problems. All of these situations can cause your toes to repeatedly hit the top of the inside of your boots.

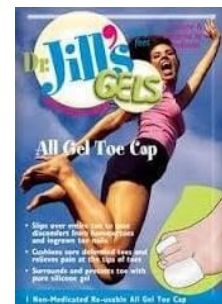
- Shop at a store like REI, Sole Perfection, or another outdoor gear store with trained fitters.
- Go in the afternoon when your feet are at their largest.

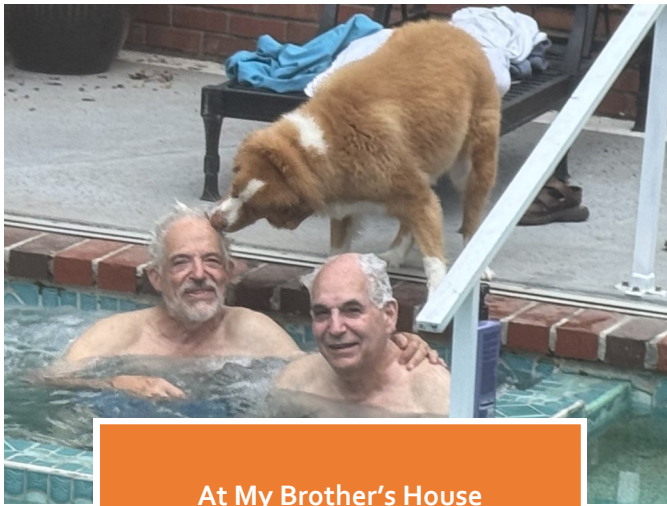
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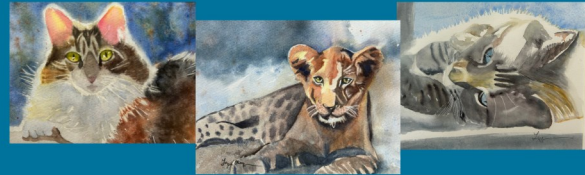
Extra Protection for Your Toes

Toe Cap \$12





At My Brother's House



Big Cats,
Little Cats

Now showing through
July 13th

Lynn Chapman is donating 20% of her proceeds to Seattle Area Feline Rescue!



Salvation- Artist and Makers Collective
5419 15th Ave NE, Shoreline, WA 98155

Don't Miss Lynn's Watercolor
Show

Summer Chipotle Chicken Cobb Salad with Cilantro Vinaigrette

For the Chicken

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 chipotle chiles in adobo, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (I added this – not in original recipe)
- 3–4 chicken breasts or thighs

The Salad

- 3–4 cups greens (see notes)
- 4 strips bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 8-10 strawberries, quartered
- 2 ears corn on the cob, kernels removed
- 1–2 ripe avocados, sliced
- salt and pepper
- Cilantro vinaigrette



Source: [Pinch of Yum](#)

Directions

1. Prep the chicken: Combine the oil, chipotles, garlic powder, cumin, oregano, black pepper, and salt in a bowl. Place the chicken in the bowl and toss to coat the chicken in the marinade. Place in the fridge and let it marinate while you prep your other ingredients.
2. Prep salad: Prep all your salad ingredients (cook the bacon, slice the strawberries, cut the corn off the cob, etc.).
3. Grill the chicken: Heat an outdoor grill (or grill pan) to about 400 degrees. Place chicken on the grill and grill for 5-6 minutes per side, until cooked through. Remove the chicken from the grill and let rest for ten minutes. Slice against the grain.
4. Salad: Arrange the greens on a large platter and top with the bacon, strawberries, corn, avocado, and grilled chicken. Season with salt and pepper. Toss with the cilantro vinaigrette and serve!

- Measure your feet—don't assume your feet are the same size as they used to be. Even adults feet can increase in size.
- Bring your orthotics with you to ensure you get the right fit. Orthotics can add a lot of volume to a shoe or boot. If you don't bring them with you, you could end up with a boot that's too big.
- Download our eBook "[How to Buy Hiking Boot to Prevent Plantar Fasciitis](#)". Most of the information is relevant for avoiding toenail problems as well.

Make Use of Specific Lacing Techniques

Sometimes despite your best efforts and the right boots, you may still find your feet sliding forward in your boots, particularly when hiking down. You may be especially prone to this problem if you have narrow heels.

Fortunately, there are 2 lacing techniques that can help tremendously in preventing the forward foot slide.

- **Use A Heel Lock for Trail Shoes**—use the extra eyelet at the top of your shoes to create a loop over the top as seen in photo. Take the lace from the opposite side and pull in through the loop. This will help tighten your shoes so your heels will stay back in the shoes.



- **Use a Surgeon's Knot for Heavy Duty Hiking Boots**—first pull all the slack out from the bottom of the boot. Before you reach the top 2 hooks, wrap the



- laces around each other twice before cinching.

Cut Your Toenails Before You Hike

Your boots may have fit you at the store, but now 2 months later your toenails are hitting the inside of your footwear. Cutting your toenails before you hike is essential for preventing this from happening.

Always cut your toenails straight across or you run the risk of developing an ingrown toenail, regardless of whether you hike.

Keep Your Feet From Flattening Out

Pregnant or have other weight gain recently? Both of these situations can cause your feet to flatten out causing yo

ur toes to hit the inside of your shoes or boots. An over-the-counter insert can help support your feet. If you also have heel pain or [Achilles tendonitis](#), [custom orthotics](#) may be a better solution.

What About Socks?

Be sure to wear the same type of socks you tried when you bought your boots. If you tried on your boots with thin socks and now you've chosen a thicker sock, your shoes will be too tight.

Other Tools to Help Prevent Foot and Ankle Problems When Hiking

- [The Definitive Guide for Stopping Heel Pain in Hikers](#)
- [The Definitive Guide to Prevent and Treat Ankle Sprains in Hikers](#)
- [Essential Foot and Ankle First Aid Kit for Hikers](#)

A Foot and Ankle First Aid Kit for Hikers

In our feature article, we shared several ways to prevent toenail injuries while hiking. Even with the best preparation, however, blisters, ankle sprains, sore heels, and minor cuts can still happen. That's why every hiker should carry a small foot and ankle first aid kit.

A compact kit doesn't take up much room, but it can make a big difference when you're miles from the trailhead. Include supplies for treating common problems like blisters, including gel blister pads, moleskin, medical tape, and alcohol wipes. Instant cold packs and an anti-inflammatory medication (if approved by your doctor) can help reduce pain and swelling from a sore heel or a mild ankle sprain.

It's also a good idea to pack basic wound care supplies such as antibiotic ointment, bandages, gauze, and tweezers for cuts, scrapes, or a damaged toenail. An elastic bandage or lightweight ankle splint can provide temporary support until you can safely get off the trail. Don't forget your cell phone and emergency contact information.

Remember, a first aid kit is designed to help you manage minor injuries—not push through a serious one. If you can't bear weight, have severe pain, or notice signs of infection, it's time to end your hike and seek medical care.

We've created a free Essential Foot and Ankle First Aid Kit for Hikers checklist to make packing easy.

[Download it here!](#)

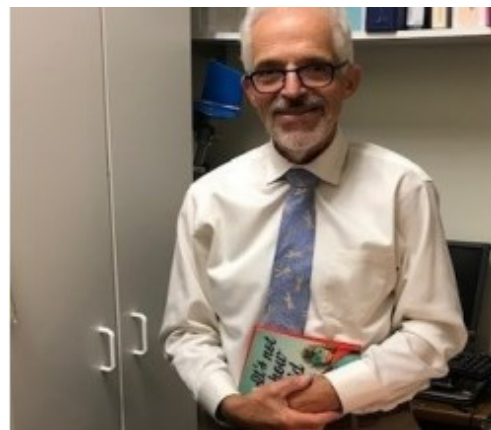


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—Dr. Rion Berg



To make an appointment, call us at 206-368-7000.