



FOOT SENSE

A monthly newsletter from your podiatrist



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November 2025

Why Are My Feet More Swollen During the Holidays?

Have your shoes been feeling tighter lately? Are your ankles or toes looking puffier than usual? As we head into the colder months and the busy holiday season, I see a lot more patients coming in with swollen feet and ankles.



The combination of cooler weather, salty comfort foods, and more time on your feet—shopping, entertaining, or standing in the kitchen—can all take a toll on circulation and joint health. The good news? Most swelling is temporary and responds well to a few simple changes. Still, knowing when it's a sign of something more serious is key to keeping your feet healthy through the holidays and beyond.

Common Reasons Your Feet Swell in the Fall and Winter

Swelling (called edema) happens when excess fluid builds up in the tissues of your feet and ankles. Here are a few common seasonal triggers:

- **Long hours standing or walking:** Holiday shopping, travel, or time spent cooking for gatherings can all cause fluid to pool in your lower legs.
- **Sitting too much:** While most are out and about many seniors move too little and don't elevate their feet
- **Cold weather and circulation changes:** Cooler temperatures can reduce blood flow, making swelling more likely for some people.

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Intensive Foot
Moisturizer

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Chicken Orzo with Butternut Squash

Before you dive into turkey, try this delicious chicken recipe. 4 servings

- 1-1.5 lb skinless, boneless chicken breast
- 12 oz butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cubed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (for roasting squash)
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme (divided)
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1 cup uncooked orzo
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (for cooking orzo)
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 5 oz fresh spinach
- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt



1. **Roast the squash:** Preheat oven to 400°F. Score squash and put it in the microwave for one minute for easier cutting. Cut into cubes and toss with 1 tablespoon olive oil, salt, pepper, 1 tablespoon thyme, and smoked paprika. Spread on a baking sheet and roast for 20–25 minutes until tender and slightly caramelized.
2. **Cook the chicken:** While squash roasts, season chicken with salt, pepper, Italian seasoning, and remaining thyme. In a large skillet, sear chicken over medium heat until browned and cooked through (about 5–6 minutes per side). Remove and cut into bite-sized pieces and set aside.
3. **Prepare the orzo:** In the same pan, add 1 tablespoon olive oil and garlic. Sauté 30 seconds, then stir in orzo. Toast lightly for 1–2 minutes.
4. **Simmer:** Add chicken stock, bring to a simmer, and cook uncovered, stirring occasionally, until orzo is tender and most liquid is absorbed (about 8–10 minutes).
5. **Combine:** Add roasted squash, spinach, and cooked chicken. Stir until spinach wilts. Then serve!

- **Rich holiday foods and salty meals:** A high-sodium diet causes fluid retention, leading to puffiness in the feet and ankles.
- **Tight footwear:** As we age, we often gain weight, our arches can collapse, and our foot size (length and width) can increase. We may find ourselves in holiday shoes that are too small or too high; both are liable to cause swelling.
- **Gout flare-ups:** This painful form of arthritis is often triggered by rich foods like red meat, shellfish, and alcohol— favorites around Thanksgiving. Gout commonly affects the big toe joint, causing sudden swelling, redness, and intense pain.
- **Sitting too long during travel:** Long flights or car rides can limit circulation, especially around the holidays when people visit family.

When Swelling Is A Cause for Concern

While mild swelling is common, some situations require prompt attention. Please reach out right away or 911 if you notice:

- Redness, warmth, or pain, especially if you have diabetes. This could signal infection or inflammation.
- Sudden swelling in one leg or foot only, which could point to a blood clot.
- Brown discoloration in the lower legs with bread dough swelling is a sign blood is pooling, which can lead to wounds that takes months to heal.
- Shortness of breath or chest pain along with swelling, which may be heart- or lung-related.
- Severe swelling with headaches or vision changes during pregnancy, which may indicate preeclampsia.

- If your swelling doesn't improve after rest, elevation, or compression socks—or if you suspect a gout flare—it's time to see a specialist.

Simple Ways to Reduce Swelling

You can often ease swelling at home and while shopping with a few simple steps:



- Elevate your feet above your heart for 15–20 minutes or longer if you're a senior.
- Wear prescription support stockings if you have bread dough swelling to prevent wounds.
- Do ankle circles or short walks to promote circulation if you sit or stand for long periods.
- Take breaks often when shopping.
- Wear supportive, properly fitted shoes. Avoid tight shoes, socks that restrict circulation, and heels over 1 inch.
- Limit salty foods and alcohol, especially around holiday meals.
- Stay hydrated, which helps flush out excess sodium and reduce fluid buildup.

Keep Your Feet Healthy This Holiday Season

Your feet carry you through shopping trips, family gatherings, and every busy day in between. If swelling or pain is slowing you down it's important to have it evaluated.

Our office can pinpoint the cause, whether it's circulation-related, inflammatory (like gout), or something more severe. From gentle, non-invasive treatments to prevention strategies, we'll help you stay comfortable and active all season long.

Ways to Help Out Your Unhoused and Needy Neighbors This Holiday Season

In Seattle and in Lake City, we've seen the number of unhoused people grow over the years. Many of our neighbors who do have housing live paycheck to paycheck, often struggle to put food on the table, and provide clothes for their children. While many forces have contributed to these problems, there are ways that each of us can make a meaningful contribution.

Donate Lightly Used or New Outerwear to the North Seattle Family Resource Center

We're collecting new socks, hats, and gloves and gently used or new coats for the clients of the North Seattle Family Resource Center from November 10-December 19th. You'll find a donation container in our waiting room.

Contributing to Tent City 4 in Lake City

You may have noticed a tent city in the former location of the Lake City Community Center. Currently, about 75-100 people live there under the auspices of SHARE/WHEEL an organization managed by formerly homeless people. Please note they are moving on Nov. 15th. Here's what you can do to help:

- Make a cash donation at the tent city OR send a check to SHARE/WHEEL at PO Box 2548, Seattle, WA 98111-2548
- Prepare a hot, nutritious meal by contacting tc4@sharewheel.org. Our marketing director has also recently started a monthly meal event for Tent City 4 with some neighbors. For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/mealsfortentcity4> or contact Lynn directly at lynn@bergdpm.com.
- Donate other food supplies – Coffee, tea, cream, sugar, canned & packaged items can be delivered to the camp at any time.
- Donate non-food supplies – We are in need for tents, tarps, flashlights and AAA-batteries, can be dropped off directly at camp any time.



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—Dr. Rion Berg



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