Common Podiatry Conditions and Terminology
Abscess

- Localized collection of pus in a cavity
Anesthesia

- Loss of feeling or sensation induced to permit surgery
- Common example: Injection given to “numb up” the toe prior to performing an ingrown toenail procedure
Appliances

- Mechanical devices used to support or realign a part of the body or to improve function.
- Common Example: Custom Orthotics as they are used to correct biomechanical deficiency.
Athlete’s Foot (Tinea Pedis)

- Layman’s term ("Athlete’s Foot") for a fungal infection of the foot (skin)
- Common Example: “Interdigital tinea pedis” (between the toes)
Atrophy

- A defect or wasting away in the size of a cell, organ, tissue or part
Bilateral

- Involving two sides
- Sometimes meaning the involvement of both feet
Biomechanical Deficiency

- Malalignment of limbs, muscular imbalances, degenerative processes, and other anatomical factors which may contribute to orthopedic injury
- Common examples/symptoms: hypermobility, structural weakness, pronation, supination, foot, knee, hip and back pain
Bursitis

- The inflammation of a bursa

(Bursa: a closed, fluid-filled sac that functions as a gliding surface to reduce friction between tissues of the body)
Callosity/Callus
(synonymous terms)

- A circumscribed thickening of the skin; hypertrophy of the horny layer from friction, pressure, or other irritation
- Also used to describe the healing following the fracture of a bone
Chiropody

- Term formerly used to describe the study and treatment of feet – still commonly used in other countries
Contracted Toes

- Also called hammertoes, toes bent upward at the middle joint
Corn

- A horny induration and thickening of the skin, usually found on the toes, that is produced by friction and pressure followed by irritation and pain.
- Common Example: between two toes that rub together due to deformity.
Cyst

- Pouch or sac, normal or abnormal, especially one that contains liquid or semisolid material
- Common Examples: Ganglion cyst
Diabetes

- A metabolic disorder of blood vessels and nerves secondary to the inadequate ability of the pancreas to produce insulin and the body to utilize it in metabolizing glucose.
- It is especially important that diabetic patients visit their podiatrist regularly, manage their blood glucose levels, and check their feet every day.
- Diabetic patients may not heal as quickly as non-diabetics and often suffer from a condition known as “neuropathy,” which decreases sensation in the feet.
Debridement

- The medical removal of dead, damaged, or infected tissue to improve healing potential of the remaining healthy tissue
- Removal may be surgical, mechanical, or chemical and is generally performed on thickened toenails, calluses, warts, and ulcerations
**Edema**

- Swelling; the presence of an abnormally large amount of fluid in the tissue of the body

- Examples shown here:
  - Lower left (non-pitting edema: suggestive of a problem with the lymphatic system)
  - Circled picture (pitting edema: suggestive of a circulatory issue)
Excision

- The act of cutting away or taking out tissue, bone, etc.

![Image of removal of bone spurs]
Exostosis

- Bony growth projecting outward from the surface of the bone
Fascia

- Ligamentous tissue, a layer of membrane beneath the skin
- Common Example: plantar fascia
- Related Condition: Plantar Fasciitis (inflammation of the plantar fascia)
Fissure

- Any cleft, crack, or groove, normal or abnormal
- Common Example: Heel fissures (grooves or cracks in callus of heels)
Flatfoot (Pes Planus)

- A condition in which one or more of the arches of the foot have flattened out.
- This causes the foot to roll inward, as seen here.
Fracture

- Break in a bone
Gait

- Manner or style of walking
- Podiatrists commonly perform “gait analysis” to see what happens during a patient’s normal walking pattern and to check for biomechanical deficiencies.
Gangrene

- Death of a tissue associated with loss of blood supply, followed by bacterial invasion and putrefaction
- This may be due to an injury, poor circulation, or an infection that was not controlled.
Hallux

- The great toe or first digit of the foot
Hallux Rigidus

- Painful flexion deformity of the great toe where there is almost complete limitation of motion at the first metatarsophalangeal joint
- Often described by the patient as stiff or painful, especially with increased activity
Heloma Durum

- Hard Corn
- Often self-diagnosed by patient as a “wart”
Hydrotherapy

- The use of water for therapeutic purposes; usually warm or hot as in a whirlpool bath
- Also called hydro-massage.
- Used to soften the skin and nails prior to debridement
Ingrown Nails

- Toenails that break through or cut into the skin or tissue around them, causing pain
- Commonly caused by improper trimming, improper shoes or hose, injury, or congenital disorders
Metatarsalgia

- Term to describe pathology in the metatarsal bones and phalangeal bones of the toes
Neuroma

- A tumor or new growth largely made up of nerve cells and nerve fibers: a tumor growing from a nerve
- Patients often describe symptoms as burning, tingling, or feeling as if their sock is “bunched up” in their shoe.
Onycho-

- The combining word form denoting relationship to the nails
- This prefix, combined with many different suffixes, describes many diseases of the nails.
- Common Examples: 
  Onychomycosis (Fungal nail) 
  Onychocryptosis (Ingrown Nail)
Ossification

- The formation of bone; the conversion of fibrous tissue or of cartilage into bone
- This x-ray of a child’s foot clearly shows that the bone formation, or ossification, is not complete.
Osteomyelitis

- Inflammation of bone caused by pyogenic (pus-forming) bacteria
- Long-term ulceration/infection may lead to this type of complication, potentially leading to surgical resection or amputation.
Affording relief, but not a cure

Palliative treatment in podiatry provides temporary relief of corns, calluses, or nail problems.

It does not permanently resolve the cause of the problem (as in surgical correction).
Pedis

- Latin term meaning “foot”
Peripheral Neuropathy

- Damage to or disease affecting nerves which may impair sensation, movement, gland or organ function, or other aspects of health, depending on the type of nerve affected.
- Common causes include systemic diseases such as diabetes, leprosy, vitamin deficiency, and medications such as chemotherapy.
- Symptoms include pain, burning, tingling, and numbness of the hands and feet, and may become worse if left untreated.
Phlebitis

- Inflammation of a vein
- Characterized by swelling, stiffness, and pain in the affected part
Pronation

- The result of a combination of factors in the tarsal and metatarsal area of the foot which lowers the arch and allows the forefoot to splay or turn outward from the midline of the body
- Patients with “flat feet” pronate, as shown in this picture.
Resection

- Removal of bone
Sprain

- A joint injury where the supporting ligaments are stretched or ruptured, but the continuity of the ligaments remains in tact
Spur

- A projecting bony enlargement
- Common Example: Heel spur, a.k.a. calcaneal spur, or spur of the “Os Calcis” (another term for heel bone)
- A bone protruding from the lower surface of the heel bone
Subungual Exostosis

- Bone spur projected upward under the nail
- Often the cause of repeated ingrown toenails (clearly shown through x-ray)
Tendons/Tendinitis

- Tendons are thick cords of tissue that connect muscles to bone.
- Tendinitis, or an inflammation of the tendon, is one of the most common causes of foot or ankle pain.
Achilles Tendon

- The tendon that connects the posterior calf muscles to the heel bone
- The strongest tendon in the body
Tenotomy

- The cutting of a tendon for correction of hammertoes/contracted toes
- When hammertoes are flexible and not rigid, a procedure referred to as a “Flexor Tenotomy” can be performed.
  - In this procedure, the tendon is released and the toe is splinted as it heals, resulting in a much straighter toe.
Tumor

- Swelling, more often used to describe a mass of new tissue that persists and grows independently of its surrounding structures
- A tumor has no physiologic use
Ulceration

- An open sore of the skin or mucous surface of a body organ, characterized by gradual disintegration and necrosis (dying) of tissue

- It is important for diabetics (especially those with neuropathy - tingling and numbness) to check their feet everyday and wear white-soled socks to check for blood
Unilateral

- Single, one side
Verruca

- A tumorous growth of the skin
- More commonly referred to as a “wart,” and caused by a virus
- The body works to protect the verruca by forming thickened skin (callus) over and around the area which may be painful to the patient
- Plural Verrucae
Bones of the Foot
26 in Total
Sides of the Foot

Medial = Toward the Inside
Lateral = Toward the Outside
Movement of the Foot

- **Inversion** = Towards the inside of the body
- **Eversion** = Away from the body
- **Dorsiflexion** = Movement where toes are brought closer to the shin
- **Plantar flexion** = Movement which decreases the angle between the sole of the foot and the back of the leg. (The movement when depressing a car pedal)
- **Abduction** = Motion that pulls a structure or part away from the midline of the body.
- **Adduction** = Motion that pulls a structure or part toward the midline of the body

![Figure 1. Excessive pronation of subtalar joint.](image)
Distal = Away from (furthest distance from the body)

Middle = Between

Proximal = Closest to the body
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