



Premier  
Podiatry &  
Orthopedics

# A Guide on How At-Home Foot Remedies are Not Effective



**When it comes to how you should take care of your feet, there are lots of myths, misunderstandings and partial truths. It could be that you have heard some questionable information from your family and friends, caught the last few minutes of a news segment, or (gasp!) saw some dubious statements on social media.**

In fact, when it comes to at-home remedies, it seems the internet just doesn't hold back. Old wives' tales about how to treat a variety of foot ailments often rear their ugly heads in the guise of viral truth bombs posted across social media platforms.

But you are smarter than that! And that's why you are reading this guide, right? To get to the bottom of what is and isn't true about foot health and how common lower limb conditions should be treated at home.

We're here to set the record straight on some of these myths with some truth bombs of our own, because healthy feet only happen when you have the facts.







# Common At-Home Foot Remedies Debunked

**Myth:** Cutting a notch in an ingrown toenail will help relieve pain.

**Fact:** Not only is this very unlikely to relieve pain, but it can cause even more problems and discomfort. In fact, new nail growth will continue to curve downward and push against the surrounding skin.

If you have developed an ingrown toenail, **don't** attempt to perform "bathroom surgery." Instead, come visit one of our two offices to get the help you need. In most cases, a simple in-office procedure will fix the problem.

**Myth:** Rubbing cut onions on foot fungus can help clear it up.

**Fact:** There is a wild claim that onions have magical antifungal, antibacterial, and detoxifying properties for the body. But the truth is rubbing onions on your feet will only make them smell like, well, onions (and maybe add a little flavor).

Although this is not one of the worst things you can do to your feet when attempting to get rid of foot fungus, there is still a good chance that doing so will make the problem worse. So please do not rub your foot fungus with onions – there are better and more efficient treatment options available.

**Myth:** Urine can help get rid of foot fungus.

**Fact:** Oddly enough, this is actually a partial truth.

We see this a lot with regards to athlete's foot, and while there is a tiny kernel of science buried in this gem, there's still no justification for using urine as an effective treatment for foot fungus (or anything else, for that matter).

Now, it isn't the urine per se that helps in treating foot fungus, but rather the urea (a compound found in urine). While urea won't kill foot fungus, it can target the thickened skin that athlete's foot may produce, allowing antifungal medications to penetrate the affected area more easily.



**Myth:** Reducing sugar in your diet will kill all nail infections.

**Fact:** This is yet another myth that also holds some little bits of truth. But though sugar gets a bad rap for a lot of things, a fungal infection shouldn't be one of them (at least in most cases).

The only situation where sugar would play a part in fungal development is in patients living with diabetes, since high glucose levels may help feed the infection and make it worse. On the other hand, if you have not been diagnosed with diabetes, then removing sugar from your diet will do absolutely nothing for your fungal foot problem.

So go ahead and enjoy that slice of cake!

**Myth:** Natural home remedies will cure fungal toenails.

**Fact:** The truth is that not all discolored, thickened toenails are caused by the same thing. Many different organisms and conditions can infect the nail. In fact, not all discolored nails are fungal. It may be due to trauma, yeast, or systemic diseases such as psoriasis.

So treating what you **think** is a toenail fungus may present no results at all because the underlying condition itself is not being treated properly. And improper care of fungal nails can contribute to a delay in healing and spread the infection to other nails and the skin on the foot.

If you suspect you have developed fungal toenails, it is best to get an accurate diagnosis before starting treatment.

**Myth:** It's best to leave a foot wound or incision out in the open to breathe, rather than keep it covered.

**Fact:** This is a dangerous misconception!

You should think of a wound on the foot or incision site after surgery as an entry point for bacteria to your body. By keeping those areas uncovered you risk the potential for harmful organisms to infect the area. (The air alone can have many harmful contaminants.)

Whenever you have a healing wound or surgical site, you should make sure to properly dress and protect the area with the appropriate sterile tools. Carefully follow the instructions given by your doctor on how to protect your feet.



**Myth:** A broken toe can't be fixed, so might as well just deal with it at home.

**Fact:** The truth is there are many things we can do to make a broken toe heal better and prevent problems later in the future, like arthritis or toe deformities.

However, this myth is believed by a lot of people out there. And how terrible that so many have braced through the pain, thinking there was nothing that could be done to get relief from their broken toe symptoms. Make sure you never make the same mistake!

When you come to our office, we will X-ray the toe to learn more about the fracture. If the broken toe is out of alignment, we may have to insert a pin, screw or plate to reposition the bone. But the bottom line is there are definitely ways to fix the problem.



## At-Home Foot Remedies That Actually Work

As you can see, home remedies (no matter who swears they work) are more often bunk than bona fide fixes. But some actually do have science on their side and sometimes perform even better than their traditional medical counterparts.

Here are some tried-and-true ways to treat common foot problems:





## For Ingrown Toenails

There are several things you can do at home to treat and prevent ingrown toenails, including:

- Washing your feet with antibacterial soap and keeping them clean and dry
- Cutting the toenails straight across
- Avoiding cutting the nails in a rounded shape
- Wearing shoes that fit well and do not have a pointy tip

## For Bunions

Though the only way to reverse the effects of a bunion is through surgery, some conservative treatment measures can help improve symptoms. Here are some things to try if a bunion is causing you pain:

- Wear properly fitting shoes without high heels
- Use a bunion pad to protect the bunion from extra pressure
- Apply ice with a cloth-covered ice pack to reduce inflammation
- Consider wearing custom-made orthotics



## For Athlete's Foot

Some easy ways to treat and prevent athlete's foot at home include:

- Keeping your feet clean and dry
- Changing socks whenever they become damp
- Using antifungal treatments like sprays, powders, or lotions on the feet



## For Plantar Fasciitis

Most people can manage plantar fasciitis with simple at-home treatments, like:

- Resting the foot
- Applying ice to reduce inflammation
- Taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen or naproxen sodium, to reduce any pain or inflammation
- Stretching before and after physical activity, as well as throughout the day
- Wearing supportive shoes (and even complementing them with custom orthotics!)

If you are looking for tried-and-true conservative treatment methods for other common foot and ankle conditions, don't hesitate to visit our website!



## Know When It's Time to See a Doctor

Although our feet are a vital part of our overall body health, many people delay getting proper treatment for nagging foot problems until it's too late. It may be they don't recognize the signs and symptoms of common foot problems that warrant a closer look, or maybe they are worried as to what treatment will actually entail.

This is a mistake.

Waiting for foot problems to go away on their own will most likely make matters much worse, and what was once a condition that could have been easily treated with conservative measures (like at-home treatments) may end up requiring more invasive remedies (like surgery).

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, please come visit our office right away.





**A lump or bump that grows or hurts.** It may turn out to be a type of cyst, but there is also a chance it could be something more serious such as a tumor. Tumors in the foot are rare, but they do sometimes happen.

**Foot swelling or numbness that just won't go away.** Many factors could be causing these symptoms: Achilles tendonitis, a broken bone, a sprained ankle or even an underlying infection could make your feet swollen or numb.

If the numbness is accompanied by tingling or burning, it could even be a sign of nerve damage – a condition that people with diabetes are particularly susceptible to.

**Heels that are cracked and/or bleeding.** These painful symptoms can usually be remedied with a bit of sloughing and foot cream. But the longer dryness and split skin on your heel persists, the more problems you're likely to experience.

If you have diabetes and have developed these symptoms, it's especially important that you come visit our office right away.

**Ingrown toenails that are persistent or recurrent.** This condition can quickly go from being a minor nuisance to being extremely painful or infected. (But we've already talked about that.)

**Foot deformities that suddenly progress.** A good example of this is Charcot, a foot condition that can occur when you have diabetes. Charcot can lead to bones breaking and slipping out of place. When left untreated, the bones may heal in a bad position, causing foot deformities.

**A flat foot.** If you notice that one foot seems flatter than the other, this could be a sign of tendon dysfunction or even rupture. A tendon that does not work properly can lead to the bones not being lined up and this can cause arthritis in the joints.







**Foot discolorations.** For the most part, both of your feet should look alike. If one foot is a lot different in color than the other, there may be a problem.

Redness may be a sign of infection or gout. A blue or purple color may indicate a vein problem. Whiteness or paleness may be a sign of decreased blood flow.

**A wound or sore that does not heal.** This is especially important if you have diabetes because it usually takes you longer to heal.

**Numbness, burning, and tingling.** These symptoms may be signs of neuropathy, which can cause decreased sensation in your feet and often develops in those diagnosed with diabetes. Having neuropathy also increases the risk of developing foot ulcers.

**Pain that increases with activity.** If you have pain that gets worse with activity, this may be a sign of a stress fracture.

In these cases, pushing through the pain is never the answer. Come visit our office to treat a stress fracture at its early stages. Doing so will help avoid more serious problems like an actual broken bone.

**Severe pain for more than 24 hours.** This is especially important if you have just had surgery. Do not be afraid to reach out for help – if there is a problem, it is better to deal with it sooner rather than later.





Whether you have developed a foot problem you've been ignoring or if it's just been a while since your last foot checkup, the expert podiatrists at Premier Podiatry & Orthopedics are here to help!

## Find Expert Foot Care at Premier Podiatry & Orthopedics

Taking good care of your feet and ankles should be a high priority, especially if you want to continue being active for many more years to come. We certainly hope you will always dig a little deeper on the many at-home treatment options available before you try them on your feet – though it could be the case that no harm will be done, the likelihood of it actually working is usually slim.

What's worse, some of them may even cause harm!

Your best course of action whenever you are unsure about the safety of an at-home foot remedy is to give our office a call. We will be able to confirm if it is, indeed, safe for you to try, or if you should come to our office for professional diagnosis and treatment.

To schedule an appointment, simply call us at (888) 447-0733 or fill out our handy contact form online to have one of our staff members reach out to you.

