Public Opinion Research on Foot Health and Care
Findings from a Survey of 1000 US Adults
September 2010

Prepared by:

APMA
American Podiatric Medical Association
Methodology

- Edge Research conducted a national opinion survey on behalf of the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) on attitudes toward foot health and foot care.

- Online survey of 1000 US adults, age 18 or older
  - Recruited from a national panel, and weighted to census representativeness by gender, age, region and income
  - Conducted August 30, 2010 - September 7, 2010
  - Survey approximately 15 minutes in length

- The data have a margin of error of ±3.0% at the 95% confidence level for the overall results. Margin of error is higher and varies for sub-groups.
Health from Head to Toe
From Head to Toe: Feet rank lowest on the public’s list of what is important to their health.

- A majority of adults aspire to be healthier than they are today, but only half consider caring for their feet to be “very” important to their overall health.

Q01: Which of the following statements below comes closest to describing you:

Q02: Please indicate how important each of the following is to you:
From Head to Toe: At the same time, foot pain is very much a reality for many Americans.

- More adults experience problems with their feet than other parts of the body they consider to be more important to their health.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Ailment</th>
<th>Seen as Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foot pain/discomfort</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin issues/acne</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental pain/discomfort</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart issues</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q02: Please indicate how important each of the following is to you:**

**Q04: How often do you experience each of the following ailments?**
From Head to Toe: Those who have foot pain are much more likely to experience problems in other areas of the body.

- The data suggests that foot pain relates to other health issues.

### Other Health Issues/Ailments
(Experience all/most of the time)

- Weight issues: 42% experience regular foot pain, 65% total
- Back pain/discomfort: 28% experience regular foot pain, 59% total
- Joint pain/arthritis: 26% experience regular foot pain, 64% total
- Knee pain/discomfort: 21% experience regular foot pain, 52% total
- Circulatory issues/ailments: 10% experience regular foot pain, 32% total
- Heart issues: 7% experience regular foot pain, 20% total

Q04: How often do you experience each of the following ailments? (top two box – all/most of time)
**From Head to Toe: Most Americans have experienced a foot problem.**

- Almost eight-in-ten adults have experienced some type of foot ailment in their life. Nail problems, sweaty feet/foot odor, ball of foot and heel pain are most common.

### Specific Foot Ailments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ailment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nail problems</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweaty feet / foot odor</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain in the ball of the feet</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heel pain/plantar fasciitis</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunions</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bone spurs</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendonitis (Achilles or other)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress fractures</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinched nerve/neuroma</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammertoes</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Experienced a Foot Ailment

- 77% experienced at least one foot ailment.
- 55% experienced 2 or more ailments.
- 34% experienced 3 or more ailments.
- 20% experienced 4 or more ailments.

Average ailments experienced: **2.0**

Q19: Have you ever experienced any of the following foot ailments? Select all that apply.
A Foot in Need: Large numbers of US adults complain that their feet hurt at the end of each day.

- 43% of adults say they wish their feet didn’t hurt as much at the end of the day
- 41% feel that if their feet felt better, their back might not hurt as much
- 41% believe their overall health would be better if they did not experience foot pain/ailments

Q29: How well does each of the following statements describe YOU? (Top 3 box – somewhat well or more)
Foot Neglect, A Foot in Need
A Foot in Need: Feet are not cared for with regularity.

- Only one-quarter take care of their feet all the time, with an additional third taking care of their feet “most of the time.” Teeth, eyes, heart, and skin all are cared for regularly by more adults.

Q03: Now, please indicate how regularly you do each of the following:
A Foot in Need: Body parts that cause *less pain* get more care than feet.

- Notably, teeth, skin and heart.

Experience Foot Pain

- Yes, 50%
- 85%
- 24%
- 35%
- 26%

Experience Skin Issues/Acne

- Yes, 37%
- 90%
- 23%
- 40%
- 27%

Experience Dental Pain

- Yes, 33%
- 93%
- 14%
- 38%
- 41%

Experience Heart Issues

- Yes, 18%
- 92%
- 21%
- 41%
- 30%
A Foot in Need: Foot pain often leads to physical limitations.

• Walking and exercise are most likely to be inhibited by foot or ankle pain, as well as the ability to be on one’s feet. Large majorities of those with regular foot pain are impacted.

**Activities Restricted by Foot Pain**

- Walking: 70%
- Exercising: 64%
- Standing up for long periods of time: 64%
- Doing housework: 43%
- Going to work/doing your job: 37%
- Playing with children/grandchildren: 29%
- Traveling for leisure or business: 26%

72% of Americans say foot pain has impacted their lifestyle in at least one of these ways.

Q26: Has foot or ankle pain ever inhibited or stopped you from performing any of the following activities? Select all that apply.

All adults: 64%
Experience regular foot pain (n=176): 70%
A Foot in Need: Those who experience foot pain, as well as other at-risk groups, wish they could do a lot more on their feet.

- Those who regularly experience foot pain, or have high blood pressure, weight issues, or rarely exercise say they would exercise, walk or participate in activities *more* if their feet did not hurt so much.

Would Do The Following More if Feet Didn’t Hurt
(Describe at least somewhat)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Regular Foot Pain</th>
<th>High blood pressure</th>
<th>Weight issues</th>
<th>Rarely/Never Exercise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exercise more</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk more</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in more activities</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q29 TOP 3 BOX `DESCRIBE PERFECTLY/WELL/SOMEWHAT`: How well does each of the following statements describe YOU?
Feet Misunderstood
Importance of Feet: In theory, Americans believe foot health is fundamental to well-being.

- Large majorities agree that foot health is critical to their overall well-being, and that their feet warrant attention and care.

**Importance of Foot Care**
(Agree with statement)

- 74% agree that foot health is fundamental to your overall well-being.
- 80% agree that it is important to pay attention to feet and get them the care they need.

Q17: How much do you agree/disagree with each of the following statements?
**Feet Misunderstood:** There appear to be three factors contributing to the neglect of feet.

1. **Lack of Knowledge about Podiatry**
   - Little understanding of the role of a podiatrist, what a podiatrist can do, and when to visit

2. **Low Awareness about Connection with Other Health Issues**
   - No depth of knowledge on connection between feet and other vital organs/functions

3. **Live With It or Self Medicate**
   - Tendency to live with foot pain or self-medicate using over-the-counter products
Feet Misunderstood: The most common remedy for foot ailments is self-medicating.

- When it comes to seeking medical attention, visits to primary care doctors rank slightly higher than podiatrists.
- Despite discomfort, close to 3-in-10 adults choose to simply just live with their pain.

**Actions Taken to Address Foot Ailments**

- Treated with over-the-counter products: 37%
- Visited my primary care doctor: 27%
- Nothing - lived with the foot pain or problem: 27%
- Visited a podiatrist: 22%

Q21: Which of the following have you done to address your foot ailment/s? Select all that apply.
Feet Misunderstood: Problems with feet do not often prompt immediate attention and a visit to the podiatrist.

- Few seek podiatric care as soon as they notice something is wrong with their feet. It is more likely that care is only considered when the problem progresses to real limitations on lifestyle or causes pain.

When to Visit a Podiatrist

- 16% As soon as you notice/feel something unusual about your feet
- 34% When something unusual persists for a few days
- 37% When something unusual cannot be treated with an over-the-counter product
- 40% When something unusual starts to cause pain
- 51% When something unusual starts to put limitations on your lifestyle/activities
- 12% I’d never think to go to a podiatrist

More severe

Q25: At what point does a foot ailment become something that requires YOU to go and see a podiatrist? (If you have never experienced a foot ailment, please answer based on what you would anticipate.) Select all that apply.
Feet Misunderstood: While foot ailments are widespread, familiarity and experience with podiatrists are considerably lower – even for those with regular foot pain.

- Have had a Foot Ailment
  - Total US Adults: 77%
  - Among Those Who Experience Regular Foot Pain: 91%

- Familiar with Podiatrists (very/pretty familiar)
  - Total US Adults: 54%
  - Among Those Who Experience Regular Foot Pain: 63%

- Have Visited a Podiatrist (in lifetime)
  - Total US Adults: 36%
  - Among Those Who Experience Regular Foot Pain: 55%

- Have Visited Podiatrist Recently (last two years)
  - Total US Adults: 15%
  - Among Those Who Experience Regular Foot Pain: 34%
Feet Misunderstood: Familiarity with podiatrists’ work is low compared to other health professionals, and only one-third have seen a podiatrist.

- Adults are least familiar with podiatrists versus other medical professionals.
- Those that experience regular foot pain are slightly more familiar with podiatry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Care Professional</th>
<th>Very familiar</th>
<th>Pretty familiar</th>
<th>Visited in Lifetime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary care physician</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optometrist/Ophthalmologist</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dermatologist</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthopedist/Orthopedic surgeon</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podiatrist</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feet Misunderstood: Americans have a limited understanding of what a podiatrist can do.

- Most common associations with podiatry surround the general field of healthcare and basic issues related to the feet and ankle.
- Specialties within podiatry, including surgery, and a podiatrist’s ability to identify other health issues, are not as widely associated.

Associations with Podiatrists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stronger</th>
<th>Weaker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diagnose/treat problems related to the feet</td>
<td>Can specialize in sports medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialists</td>
<td>Can identify other serious health problems when examining your feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed health care professionals</td>
<td>Surgeons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians</td>
<td>Diagnose/treat problems related to the lower leg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnose/treat problems related to the ankle</td>
<td>An important member of your overall health care team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can specialize in pediatrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can specialize in biomechanics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feet Misunderstood: There is limited awareness surrounding the feet and its connection to other parts of the body/medical issues.

- A majority of adults are aware that circulatory disorders can be detected while examining the feet. There is lower awareness of the connection with other health issues.

**Awareness of Health Issues That Can Be Detected While Examining the Feet**

- Circulatory disorders: 58%
- Diabetes: 48%
- Nerve disorders: 42%
- Arthritis: 38%
- Heart disease: 15%
- Not sure: 22%

Q18: Which, if any, of the following health issues do you think can be detected when examining the feet? Select all that apply.
**Feet Misunderstood:** Those with foot pain/ailments and other health issues are more aware of what can be detected through the feet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Issue</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Regular Foot pain</th>
<th>Experienced 2+ foot ailments</th>
<th>Have high blood pressure</th>
<th>Have high cholesterol</th>
<th>Have diabetes/risk</th>
<th>Have weight issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circulatory disorders</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td><strong>69%</strong></td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nerve disorders</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthritis</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bold, green indicate significantly higher awareness

Q18: Which, if any, of the following health issues do you think can be detected when examining the feet? Select all that apply.
Motivations to Visit Podiatrist: More severe health problems are more likely to drive patients to a podiatrist.

- Severe issues such as surgery, fractures, and infections prompt more adults to consider a visit.
- Issues such as blisters, foot odor, and warts are less likely to make them consider an appointment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ailment</th>
<th>Likelihood to Consider a Podiatric Visit (very likely)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foot surgery</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankle surgery</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bone spurs</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress fractures</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot infection</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetic wound care</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heel pain/plantar fasciitis</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendonitis (Achilles or other)</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinched nerve/neuroma</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammertoes</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain in the ball of the feet</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nail problems</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunions</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planter’s warts</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweaty feet/foot odor</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blisters</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Few are likely to visit a podiatrist for the more common foot ailments they report having.
Information Needs: There is a general desire to learn more about caring for feet.

- Desire to learn more about how I can take care of my feet: 58%
- Desire to know where I can seek help for the foot pains/ailments I experience: 39%
- Desire to know where I can find the best podiatrist in my area: 39%

64% want some type of additional information on feet.
### Foot Pain and Neglect
- Most Americans have experienced a foot ailment/problem, and half say they have foot pain at least some of the time.
- In addition, more Americans experience pain and problems with their feet, than other body areas they consider more important to health (e.g. skin, teeth, heart).

### Health Head to Toe
- From head to toe, the foot ranks lowest on a list of body parts/functions that Americans see as important to their health and well-being.
- Yet few say they would seek out a podiatrist unless the problem was severe – impacting their lifestyle, causing real pain, or needing surgery.

### Staying on Your Feet
- Foot pain impacts a majority of Americans’ daily activities – whether it be walking, exercising, or just standing for long periods of time.
- And those with regular foot pain are much more likely to suffer from a variety of other health issues, including back, knee, and joint pain, weight and heart problems.

### Feet Misunderstood
- Foot neglect stems from lack of knowledge.
- Americans have limited understanding on the role of the podiatrist, what a podiatrist can do, and when to see a podiatrist.
- Yet there is a desire for more information on how to take care of one’s feet.