High School Students and their Feet: Findings from a National Survey of 1000 US Teenagers

March 2012

Prepared by:
Methodology

• Edge Research conducted a national opinion survey on behalf of the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) on teenagers’ attitudes toward foot health, foot care, and their knowledge of and experiences with podiatrists.

• Online survey of 1000+ high school students
  – Recruited from a national panel, and weighted to be census representative by gender, grade, and region
  – Conducted February 16th-28th, 2012
  – Survey approximately 10 minutes in length

• The data have a margin of error of ±3.0% at the 95% confidence level for the overall results. The margin of error is higher and varies for sub-groups.
Feet: Out of Sight, Out of Mind
- Large numbers of teenagers recognize the importance of and regularly care for their teeth, skin, eyes, and bodies (exercise), but few for their feet. Feet are literally out of sight, out of mind.
- In some ways, teens are more diligent than adults when it comes to healthy behaviors but are much less informed about foot health.
- There are gender differences: Girls (not boys) are more likely to care about having attractive feet versus healthy feet.

Foot Pain: Teens are Not Immune
- A third of teenagers experience foot pain at least some of the time.
- Sports are the #1 cause of foot pain among teens. Half who have had pain say sports was the source.
- Three-quarters of high school students play a school or recreational sport, and of them, 4 in 10 have injured their feet doing so.
- Two in 10 suffer from foot pain from uncomfortable shoes – girls more so than boys. High heels are the most painful shoe choice. A third of girls say they would rather go barefoot than wear shoes!

Podiatry, huh?
- High school students are woefully uninformed about podiatry.
- While 6 in 10 have had a specific foot problem in their life, most self-medicate or just live with it.
- Fewer than 2 in 10 have visited a podiatrist.
- Visiting a podiatrist makes a real impression attitudinally and behaviorally! These teens are much more likely to understand the importance of foot health and care for their feet.
Feet: Out of Sight, Out of Mind
Out of Sight, Out of Mind: While the majority of teens report being focused on aspects of their health, few recognize the importance of foot care.

Q08: How important are each of the following to you? (top two box)

Q09: And how regularly do you do each of the following? (top two box)
**Out of Sight, Out of Mind:** Teenagers are just as diligent as adults (or in some cases, more so) in caring for their bodies, except their feet.

**Regularly Care for or Do**

- **Take care of teeth:** 87% Teenagers, 79% Adults
- **Take care of skin:** 72% Teenagers, 67% Adults
- **Take care of eyes:** 63% Teenagers, 73% Adults
- **Exercise:** 53% Teenagers, 50% Adults
- **Take care of feet:** 32% Teenagers, 61% Adults

Q09: And how regularly do you do each of the following?

* Data from an APMA/Edge Research survey of 1006 US adults, August-September 2010
Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Most teens admit that they give little thought to their foot health.

Honestly, how much thought do you give to the health of your feet?
(“5” means “a lot,” “1” means “haven’t thought about it at all”)

- Little (2): 25%
- Not at all (1): 33%
- A lot-some, 41%
- A lot (5): 6%
- 4: 9%
- 3: 26%

Q10: Honestly, how much thought do you give to the health of your feet? Please use the scale below, where “5” means “a lot of thought” and “1” means “haven’t thought about it at all.”
Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Only about half of teenagers see feet as important to overall health; few recognize their complexity and the need for expert care. They are much less informed than adults.

It is important to pay attention to feet and get them the care they need

- 21% Agree a lot
- 56% Agree a little
- 80% Adults

Foot health is important to your overall health and well being

- 19% Agree a lot
- 50% Agree a little
- 74% Adults

Feet can be an important sign of other serious health problems

- 14% Agree a lot
- 40% Agree a little
- 70% Adults

Feet are incredibly complicated and need the expert care of a podiatrist

- 11% Agree a lot
- 30% Agree a little
- 61% Adults

Q11: How much do you agree/disagree with each of the following statements?

* Data from an APMA/Edge Research survey of 1006 US adults, August-September 2010
Foot Care: The majority of teens are trimming their toenails and cleaning their feet. More girls have given themselves pedicures than have gone for a professional pedicure.

Foot Care within Last Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trimmed your toenails</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaned your feet on a daily basis</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied lotions/creams to your feet</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive/comfortable footwear</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Done leg/ankle/foot exercises</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given yourself a pedicure</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gotten a professional pedicure (like at a nail...)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used insoles or orthotics in your shoes</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q13: In the last year, have you done any of the following to take care of your feet? Select all that apply.
Foot Care: There are significant gender differences when it comes to choosing healthy versus attractive feet. Most boys want healthy feet, while slightly more girls would prefer attractive feet.

If you could have one of the following, which would it be?

Healthy Feet
- Boys: 61%
- Girls: 40%

Attractive Feet
- Boys: 17%
- Girls: 46%

38% of girls wish they had prettier feet

Q12: If you could have one of the following, which would it be: healthy feet, attractive feet, not sure?
Foot Pain: Teens are Not Immune
Foot Pain: Few teens say they experience foot pain with great regularity, though a third do at least some of the time. Sports are the #1 cause of foot pain among teens.

36% of teens experience foot pain at least some of time versus 50% of adults

Q15: How often, if ever, do you experience foot or ankle pain?
Q16: What caused your foot or ankle pain? Select all that apply.
Foot Pain and Sports: Most teens participate in some type of sport, and of them, almost 4 in 10 say they have injured their feet doing so.

Sports and Foot Pain

- 38% of these athletes say they have injured their foot playing a sport
- By senior year, almost half of athletes (45%) have had such an injury
- 29% of those who experience foot pain say it has stopped them from playing a sport
- 31% say foot pain has stopped them from exercising, walking, or running
- The most common issues reported among those who have had a sports-related injury are sprains (47%), blisters (32%), and broken bones (12%)
Foot Pain and Shoes: Bad shoe choices do cause pain, particularly for teen girls.

Girls, Shoes, and Pain

- Girls are more likely to have experienced foot pain from uncomfortable shoes (25%) than are boys (14%)
- High heels cause the most foot pain for girls (64% of girls who wear them say they are painful)
- When a shoe hurts their feet, more girls will switch to a more comfortable pair (53%) than grin and bear it (40%)
- A third of girls (34%) would just rather go barefoot than wear shoes!
Foot Pain and Shoes: High heels are by far the most uncomfortable shoe among wearers. More teens wear athletic shoes than any other type, and most describe them as comfortable.

Q24: What type of shoes do you wear regularly? Select all that apply
Q25: And do any of the shoes below hurt your feet? (Rebased on wearers of those shoes)
Foot Problems: The majority of teenagers have had a specific foot problem but are likely to either self-medicate or just live with it.

### Specific Foot Ailments

**62% of teens have had one of these foot problems**

- No specific ailments: 38%
- Blisters: 22%
- Sprain: 22%
- Sweaty feet / foot odor: 18%
- Warts: 12%
- Athlete’s foot: 11%
- Flat feet: 10%
- Nail problems: 7%
- Heel pain: 6%
- Broken bone: 6%
- Pain in the ball of the feet: 5%
- Stress fractures: 3%
- Tendonitis: 3%
- Infection: 2%
- Pinched nerve: 1%
- Other: 3%

### Pain Management

(Among those who have had foot pain, n=784)

- Treated with over-the-counter products: 48%
- Nothing - lived with the foot pain or problem: 32%
- Visited my pediatrician or family physician: 24%
- Visited an orthopedist: 10%
- Visited a podiatrist: 10%
Podiatry, huh?
Podiatry: There is a real opportunity to educate teens about podiatry. Few are familiar with this specialty.

Q20: How familiar are you with Podiatrists?

Familiarity with Podiatrists

- Extremely, 2%
- Very, 4%
- Somewhat, 21%
- Not too, 44%
- Not at all/never heard of/dk, 29%
- Familiar: 27%
- Not familiar: 73%
Podiatry: Fewer than 2 in 10 teens have visited a podiatrist. For those that have, it has made a real impression both attitudinally and behaviorally.

18% of teens have visited a podiatrist

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<tr>
<td>Within year</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>3%</td>
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Those who have visited a podiatrist:

- Are more likely to see foot health as important – 60%
- Believe that foot health is important to overall health and well being – 65%
- Believe it is important to pay attention to feet and get them the care they need – 75%
- Are more likely to regularly take care of feet – 51%
- Are about twice as likely to say they would visit a podiatrist when something unusual continues for a few days (21%) or when something unusual starts to cause pain (25%)
- Have injured their feet from playing sports (53%). They tend to be more active/exercise (61%).

Q21: A podiatrist is a doctor who focuses on problems with your feet, ankle, or lower leg. When was the last time you visited a podiatrist?
Podiatry: Because teens are uninformed, it takes a lot to get them to consider a podiatrist. Few would go, even if they were experiencing something unusual that persisted and could not be treated with an over-the-counter product.

Q22: At what point does a foot or ankle problem require YOU to go to a podiatrist? (If you have never had a foot problem, please answer based on what you think you would do.)
Outreach to Teens: Most teens are using Facebook regularly. About half visit YouTube on a regular basis, 2 in 10 use Google+, and similar numbers use Twitter.

Social Media Habits
(% doing regularly)

- Facebook: 84%
- YouTube: 57%
- Google+: 21%
- Twitter: 20%
- Myspace: 2%

Q32: Which of the following do you use regularly? Select all that apply.