



60 of 100 DOCUMENTS

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**SECTION:** HANDBOOK: YOUR BODY; Pg. 91 Vol. 206 No. 6

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**HEADLINE:** Are your feet ready for summer?

**BYLINE:** Nicole de Coursy

**BODY:**

How to banish bumps, blisters, icky nail problems, and more.

Sandal season is finally here! But if you're among the 75 percent of people suffering from an embarrassing foot condition, you're probably nervous about showing off your tootsies. And women are four times more likely to develop podiatric problems than men because of our pointy shoes and sky-high heels. Here, expert advice on how to nix the most common afflictions so you can jump into summer with both feet.

**Plantar Warts**

. Symptoms: A hard, thick bump with black dots (which are the blood lines of the wart) typically found on the sole of your foot.

. How you get them: Warts are caused by a strain of human papilloma-virus (HPV), which invades skin through small cuts. You can pick up this virus anywhere you go barefoot, such as locker rooms, pools, or even your own home.

. How to get rid of them: Start by sloughing off any dead skin with a pumice stone, then apply an over-the-counter (OTC) salicylic acid liquid wart treatment such as Compound W, says Helena Anne Reid, D.P.M., spokesperson for the American Podiatric Medical Association. If that doesn't work within a month, or if your wart returns, see a podiatrist. She may apply a stronger acid or freeze the wart. These treatments can take up to 12 weeks to remove the wart. Quicker-but more painful-fixes include laser treatments or surgery.

**Fungal Infections**

. Symptoms: Dry, itchy feet likely mean you have a fungal skin infection (a.k.a. athlete's foot). Yellow, thick toenails indicate the fungus has invaded your nails.

## Are your feet ready for summer? Redbook June 1, 2006

. How you get them: Heavy winter socks and rain boots create a dark, humid environment, which facilitates fungal growth. You can also pick up the fungus at the gym or during a salon pedicure if the instruments or footbath weren't sterilized properly, says Tracey Vlahovic, D.P.M., a podiatrist at Temple University in Philadelphia.

. How to get rid of them: Once a fungal infection spreads to the nails, it's much more difficult to get rid of, so start treatment right away. Vlahovic recommends using an OTC antifungal cream such as Lamisil. If you have a nail infection, see your podiatrist, who will likely prescribe an oral version of Lamisil. But know that it can take up to a year before your toenails look normal again. In the meantime, nail polish can safely mask the condition.

## Foot Odor

. Symptoms: Sweaty, smelly feet.

. How you get it: Your feet have 250,000 sweat glands-enough to produce up to a half-pint of perspiration daily, creating the perfect breeding ground for odor-producing bacteria.

. How to get rid of it: Wash and dry your feet thoroughly, then spray them with antiperspirant. Rub foot powder inside your shoes to absorb any moisture. When you kick off your shoes, spray them with Lysol to kill any bacteria, and give them a day to air out, says Oliver Zong, D.P.M., a podiatrist at NYC Foot Care in New York City.

## Blisters

. Symptoms: A painful, fluid-filled lesion.

. How you get them: Wearing sandals and increased sweating during summer creates friction between your feet and shoes, which can cause a blister to form.

. How to get rid of them: Cover blisters with moleskin or blister pads, which prevent friction and provide extra cushioning. If it's very swollen or painful, carefully open a corner of the blister with a sterilized sewing needle, gently drain fluid, then apply Neosporin, covering with a bandage immediately to avoid infection.

## Ingrown Toenails

. Symptoms: Pain and swelling around the nail.

. How you get them: Pedicurists often round the corners of nails, which may cause them to grow into the skin. Also, shoes that cram toes together can push your nails into your flesh.

. How to get rid of them: See a podiatrist, who will remove the part of the nail that's ingrown. In the meantime, soak your foot in a warm salt bath to ward off pain and infection. And cut your toenails straight across using a toenail clipper.

20 percent of people call their feet the most unattractive part of their body, according to a recent foot docs' survey.

**GRAPHIC:** PHOTOGRAPH, Put your best feet forward., GETTY IMAGES.

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98 of 100 DOCUMENTS

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Girls' Life

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GL Body Q and A.

**BODY:**

PERIODS. BREASTS, DOWN-THERE HAIR...HOW DOES A GIRL DEAL WITH ALL THIS?!? WE'VE GATHERED YOUR MOST PRIVATE HEALTH QUESTIONS-ONES YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW THE ANSWERS TO BUT NEVER DARED TO ASK READ ON AS EXPERTS ANSWER YOUR MOST PRESSING, PERSONAL QUESTIONS.

ONE DAY IN THE SHOWER, I NOTICED ONE OF MY BREASTS IS BIGGER THAN THE OTHER. WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?

Don't worry--you are perfectly fine! In fact, about half of all women have different sized breasts--usually the left one is larger (who knew?), According to gynecologist Dr Carol Upright of Stanford, Conn., it's completely normal, especially as you develop, to have one breast be larger Think of it like this: Can't one of your feet be a size 6 and the other be more of a 6 1/2? Dr Upright says when your breasts are fully developed, usually by the time you're 18, they should even out some, By the way, you're probably the only one who notices the difference anyway Oh, and don't try stuffing your bra with tissue--that could lead to one embarrassing stitch.

I ALWAYS DREAD GETTING MY PERIOD BECAUSE IT MAKE ME THROW UP. WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN? AND WILL IT EVER STOP?

As it having your period weren't fun enough, "Vomiting can happen because of painful cramps or hormonal changes that come with the onset of your period," says gynecologist Dr Paula Adams Hillard, director of women's health at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. Dr Hillard suggests checking with your doc first to make sure it's OK for you to take an over-the-counter medicine, like ibuprofen (Advil, Nuprin, Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve), to help relieve symptoms. She recommends taking the medicine with food at the first sign of cramping or nausea. And don't stop taking it until your period ends, even if you're feeling better If that doesn't help, make an appointment with

your doctor.

IS THERE A PURPOSE FOR PUBIC HAIR? ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO SHAVE ALL THE HAIR THAT'S DOWN THERE?

Hair "down there" is a totally normal sign of puberty. And, yes, pubic hair has a purpose--it blocks bacteria from getting into your vagina. "Hair can appear around the vagina, throughout the bikini line and down your thighs," says Dr. Upright. How much hair you want to shave (if any) is your choice. Many women shave just the bikini line--the area your bathing suit doesn't cover. Dr. Upright suggests cleaning the area you want to shave with a washcloth or loofah first. Then, using a clean razor and shaving cream, remove the unwanted hair (see page 64 for more tips). If you have strays within your bikini line, you can pluck them with tweezers or trim them very carefully with scissors. Try a pair of safety tip scissors, like La Cross by Sally Hansen, or ones from a grooming kit. Just not those heavy-duty ones in the kitchen--ouch (and gross)! And be super careful--you don't want to look like a Chia Pet.

I LIKE LOOKING AT GIRLS' BODIES WHEN WE'RE CHANGING IN GYM. IS THAT WEIRD?

Looking at girls' bodies does not mean you're weird. Psychiatrist Robert Gerstman swears it's perfectly normal to be curious about other girls' bodies--especially as a means of comparison. If you're a tad freaked about your new breasts, it can be reassuring to see you're not going through this puberty thing alone. It's also good to realize bodies come in all shapes and sizes. However, if you feel your wandering eye is about something more than comparing body types--that you might have some confusing feelings--that's OK, too. If you need to talk to someone about these feelings, don't hesitate to go to a health teacher or school nurse.

I HAVE THIS CLEAR WHITE STUFF IN MY UNDERWEAR. WHAT IS IT. AND WHY DO I HAVE IT EVERY DAY? IS IT SUPPOSED TO ITCH OR SMELL?

This clear, white stuff is "a very normal part of puberty. It signals the uterus that it needs to get ready for changes that are about to occur," says Dr. Upright. It's sort of a warning signal that your first period will probably start within the year. Quite simply, vaginal secretions or discharge clean any bacteria in the vagina. So, even after you get your period, the discharge continues and may be heavier at certain times of the month. Wear a panty liner if it bothers you. Your vagina can be a little itchy sometimes, thanks to new hair growth, discharge buildup, or even a yeast infection. Yeast is usually present in the vagina but can multiply due to hormonal or pH-balance changes in the vagina, and that can get itchy. If you have a yeast infection, you might notice a fishy odor and clumpy white discharge. When you notice any unusual smell or irritation, see your doc. To prevent infections, Dr. Upright suggests washing thoroughly with mild, perfume-free bath soap and wearing clean, cotton underwear. Stay away from nylon panties which can cause odor and trap sweat, leading to itching or infection.

I'M SELF-CONSCIOUS ABOUT MY FEET. I CAN'T EVEN TAKE MY SHOES OFF IN FRONT OF MY FRIENDS BECAUSE MY FEET SMELL SO BAD. HELP!

Foot stank comes from sweat glands that secrete substances into the feet and make your feet damp, which causes odor. That fluid also causes yucky bacteria to grow. Dermatologist Dr. Christopher Nanni of Chelsea Eye Associates in New York says the ultimate culprit to stinky feet are your shoes. "While feet might not smell if your shoes have been off awhile, the bacteria reactivates when it gets wet and hot," says Dr. Nanni. He says to wash and dry your sneakers, change socks daily (or more if you're prone to sweating), spray shoes with Lysol and sprinkle with foot powder. If it's extreme, use underarm antiperspirant spray. Yep, Secret on your feet. And go for canvas shoes that breathe. Hey, what a great excuse to go shoe shopping!

I HAVE A FEW SMALL HAIRS ON MY BREASTS. SHOULD I SHAVE THEM OFF?

Don't shave them off--you'll wind up with nipple stubble! As your body develops, hair grows all over--legs, underarms, stomach, pubic area and even breasts. Just pluck those suckers with tweezers.

**I'M SO SCARED TO USE A TAMPON. DOES IT HURT TO PUT IT IN? WHAT IF IT GETS LOST OR STUCK INSIDE ME?**

There are real benefits to tampons, so don't write them off just yet. For one, you can say goodbye to messy bulky pads, and chill at the pool with no worries. First, read the instructions that come in the tampon box. When you're ready to insert the tampon into your vagina, it might be easier to sit down rather than stand up. Be patient and try to relax. Getting tense and nervous won't make the process any easier (your muscles will contract). If you want, use a hand mirror so you can see what you're doing. You can even use a bit of lubricating jelly, like Aquagel, on the tip of the tampon. It's not supposed to hurt so, if it does, you probably inserted it incorrectly. Be patient, and keep trying. Once you've put it in right, you won't feel a thing. As for the tampon getting lost or stuck, that's very rare. "It'll come out when you tug the string," says Dr. Hillard. "A little discomfort is possible when you remove it, because the tampon can dry the sides of the vagina since it absorbs fluid." And because the vagina muscles contract, you need to be relaxed to remove it. Start with a slim tampon until you're comfortable using them.

**WHAT ARE THOSE HUGE PAINFUL PIMPLES I GET NEXT TO MY BIKINI LINE, AND WHAT SHOULD I DO?**

They might look like pimples, but don't try to pop them! They're actually ingrown hairs. Shaving and even the elastic of your underwear rubbing against your bikini line can cause bumps. Dermatologist Dr Nancy Silverberg of Newport Beach, Calif., recommends using an anti-bacterial soap to wash the bikini area before shaving. Also, keep your shaving ritual to once a week, and don't rub body lotion on that area after shaving. If the bumps become inflamed, try an over-the-counter treatment cream, like Surgi-Bikini Relief by Ardell, to relieve redness and irritation. You might also want to try sporting looser underwear.

**I HAVE WARTS ALL OVER MY HANDS AND I'M REALLY EMBARRASSED HOW CAN I GET THEM TO GO AWAY?**

First, make sure they're actually warts. "They should be either very flat and pink or large and cauliflower-like in appearance," says Dr Nanni, who recommends an over-the-counter med that contains salicylic acid as the first line of defense. He suggests using adhesive patches on larger warts and Compound W liquid medicine on smaller ones. "Put the medication on the wart at bedtime, after you shower, for two to three weeks," says Dr Nanni. "The medicine penetrates moist skin better." Hope fully the warts will turn white and flake off. Once that happens, use a pumice to remove dead skin on larger warts. And don't worry if you see redness or inflammation--you want the pumice to stimulate the immune system, which kills the virus. And if the warts don't disappear, see your dermatologist for more dramatic measures--freezing, acids or laser treatment. c

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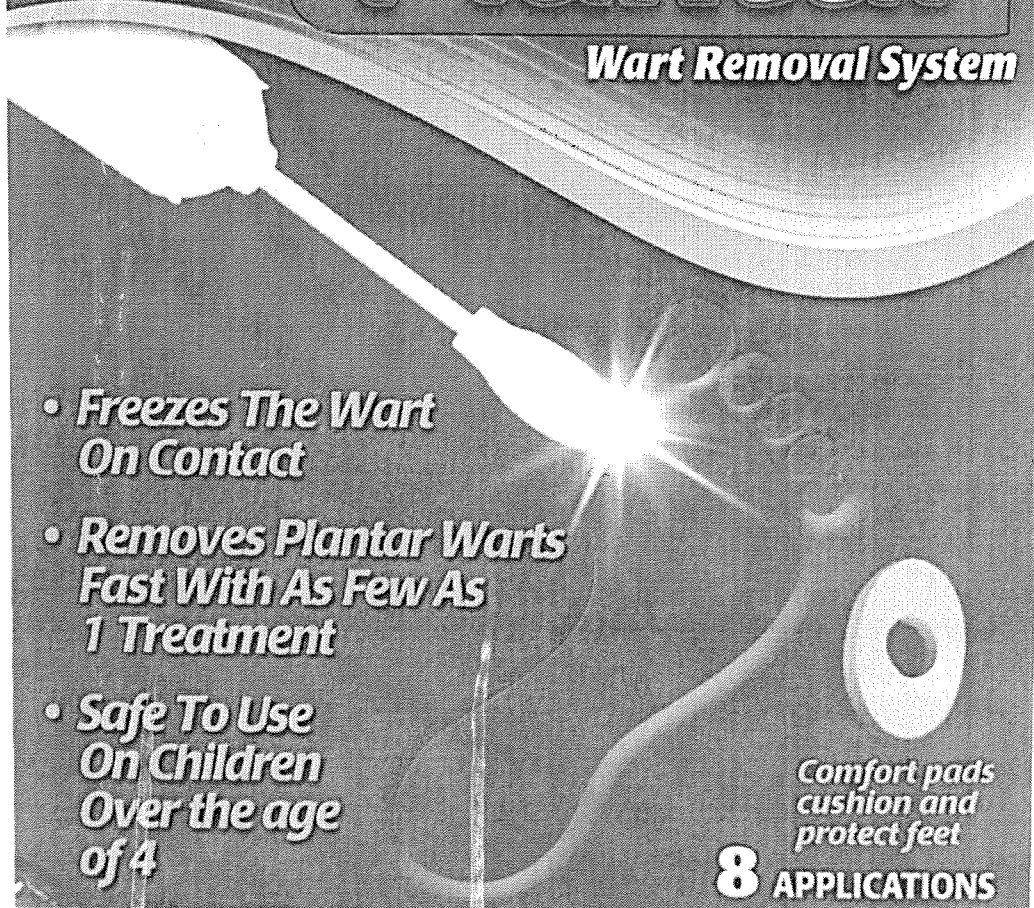


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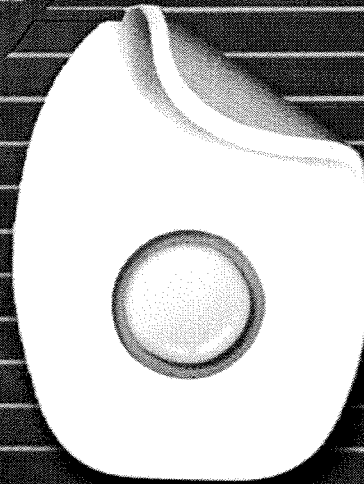
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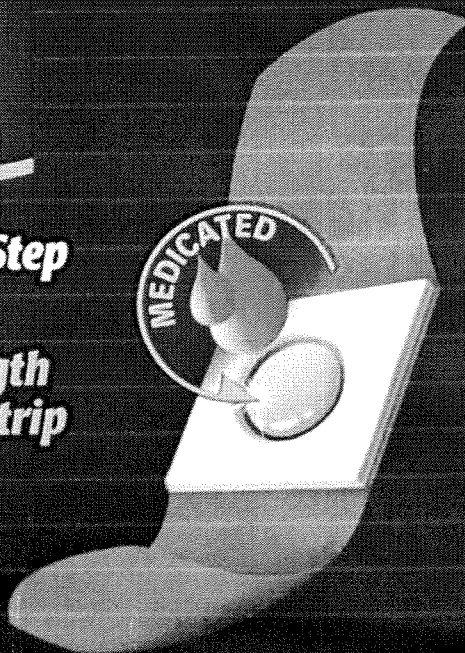
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