**CAP health & wellness** HSO Briefing: FOOT CARE

**Purpose:**

|  |
| --- |
| (U) **Bottom Line:**   * Risk to populations**: very low** **| low** | **moderate** | **high** * **Personnel with preventable injury to their feet are a liability to their ground ES team** * **Avoid foot injury by properly caring for your feet before and during a mission** |

**Overview:**

In the field personnel who cannot walk due to injury must be carried. This places an avoidable and unnecessary burden on the other members of the ES ground team. In other less strenuous activities foot injuries can interfere with your full participation and enjoyment.

Various considerations merit attention in keeping our feet ready for action!

* Shoes
* Socks
* Blisters
* Athlete's foot
* Nail care

**Boots**

* Take the socks you will wear in the field with you when trying on field boots
* Get the right size boots that fit your feet properly
* Keep your boots in good condition
* Break in boots thoroughly before wear for prolonged periods
* It is not necessary to use waterproofing treatment on boots
  + Want to avoid holding moisture inside the boot

**Socks**

* Socks need to be the right size for your feet
* Wear your socks with no creases, folds, and not bunched up
* Medium cushion soles are effective in padding your foot
* Wool is a good insulator when wet and probably the best overall sock
* The sock should reach the top of your boot
* Socks must be in good repair
* Have several pairs with you on field operations
  + One pair on your feet
  + One pair drying
  + One pair in your daypack

**Blisters**

* Good leaders and team medics check the feet of their subordinates during rest and meal stops in the field
* Ensure their socks are clean and dry
* Inspect the feet for "hot spots" and blisters
* Initiate proper treatment for blisters
* Enforce policy on keeping feet dry and clean
* Avoid preventable foot injury that may degrade mission performance
* **Treatment of a "hot spot"**
  + Prior to blister formation an irritated area on the foot needs attention
  + Common sites are on the heel and the ball of the foot
  + Protection with "moleskin" padded dressing may prevent blister formation and reduce pain
  + Tincture of Benzoin is a good additional measure to put on the area (and allow to fully dry) before applying the moleskin.

**Treatment of a blister**

* If the blister is unlikely to break and is not painful:
  + Apply tincture of benzoin to the area surrounding the blister to aid in sticking the dressing to the foot
  + Cut a hole in a piece of moleskin larger than the blister and place it around the blister
  + Pad the blistered area with a non-adherent dressing and tape
  + Reassess the blister frequently
* If the blister is painful or likely to rupture
  + Cleanse the blister with alcohol
  + Carefully lance the blister with a sterile needle and evacuate the fluid
  + Apply a non-adherent dressing
  + Reassess the blister regularly
  + Be vigilant for infection and seek medical care if the area appears infected.

**Athlete's foot**

* Athlete's foot is a fungal infection of the skin
* Promoted by dark, warm, and damp conditions
* Usually starts between the toes
* May spread on the feet
* Treatment with a topical over-the-counter antifungal product is usually effective

**Ingrown Toenail**

* Occurs when the toenails are cut too short in a rounded fashion
* It is difficult to cut the corners of the nail without leaving a sharp remnant that embeds in the skin.
* The nail will continue to grow, causing local pain and tenderness
* Infection of the tissue surrounding the nail may result
* The problem is avoided by properly cutting the toenails

***Recommendations:***

* Avoid preventable foot injury by proper foot hygiene
* Wear proper fitting and broken in boots
* Wear proper socks that are clean and dry
* Proactively treat common foot ailments to prevent injury that degrades mission performance

**Questions**: **Contact your Region/Wing/Unit Health Services Officer or**

Lt Col Thomas Janisko, CAP

Senior Program Director, Health Services, NATCAP

202-761-0348 / Thomas.Janisko@usace.army.mil