

Frequently Asked Questions

Today's podiatrists are specialists, medically and surgically trained to treat the foot and ankle. From sports injuries and diabetes complications to pediatric deformities and heel pain, podiatrists are able to tackle all of your foot care needs. Licensed in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, there are approximately 15,000 podiatrists practicing in the United States. Here are answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) about today's podiatrists.

Q. What is the difference between a podiatrist, podiatric physician, and podiatric surgeon?

A. Podiatrists, podiatric physicians, and podiatric surgeons are all terms used to describe doctors of podiatric medicine (DPMs). All are uniquely qualified among medical professionals to treat the foot and ankle based on their education, training, and experience. The amount and type of surgical procedures performed by podiatrists may vary based on each individual's training and experience and personal choice within their practice.

Q. What type of medical education do DPMs receive?

A. DPMs receive medical education and training comparable to medical doctors or doctors of osteopathic medicine, including four years of undergraduate education, four years of graduate education at one of nine podiatric medical colleges, and two or three years of hospital-based post-graduate residency training.

Q. Are podiatrists restricted to treating the foot and ankle only?

A. Although a podiatrist's scope of practice can vary from state to state, all states permit treatment of the foot, while 44 states also permit treatment at or above the ankle.

Q. Do podiatrists encounter patients with serious illnesses?

A. On a daily basis, podiatrists treat foot and ankle conditions of patients with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, arthritis, obesity, heart disease, and peripheral arterial disease. These illnesses can lead to serious foot and ankle problems. With proper treatment from a podiatrist, more serious complications may be avoided.

Q. Do podiatrists have areas of specialty in which they focus?

A. Within the field of podiatric medicine and surgery, podiatrists can focus on specialty areas such as surgery, sports medicine, biomechanics, geriatrics, pediatrics, orthopedics, or primary care.

Q. Do podiatrists accept health insurance?

A. Foot and ankle services provided by podiatrists are usually covered by health insurance plans and most podiatrists participate in private and public health insurance plans. However, not all podiatrists accept all insurance plans. To find out if your health insurance plan is accepted, contact the podiatrist's office in advance. Also, check with your health insurance company regarding the foot and ankle services covered under your plan.

Q. How do I find a qualified podiatrist?

A. Visit www.apma.org/findapodiatrist to locate a podiatrist in your area by city or zip code.

