



Find out more

Foot Health Services
Tel: 01603 216021

Norwich Community Hospital
Bowthorpe Road
Norwich
Norfolk
NR2 3TU



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You can receive help with queries about NCH&C services from **Patient Advice and Liaison Service**

Telephone: 0800 088 4449
Email: pals@nchc.nhs.uk
(Monday-Friday 9am-5pm)

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Corns and callous

Information for patients

The skin on the soles of our feet is thicker to withstand the stress of our bodyweight and movement. Corns and callous are areas where too much pressure and friction (rubbing) cause the skin to thicken excessively. This is a normal protective response to the forces acting on the skin against a bone, shoe or the ground.

Callous is an extended area of thickened, hard skin on the soles of the feet. It is usually symptomatic of an underlying problem such as a bony deformity, a particular style of walking or inappropriate footwear. Some people have a natural tendency to form callous because of their skin type. Elderly people have less fatty tissue in their skin and this can lead to callus forming on the ball of the foot.

Corns are small cones of very hard skin and are caused by pressure or friction over bony areas. Corns on the tips of toes are usually a result of a toe deformity such as a clawed toe. Corns on the tops of toes are usually caused by footwear that is too narrow or shallow, especially if they form on the outside of the little toes.

Corns can form between the toes but they are more likely to be whitish and rubbery in texture as the skin is moist from sweat or from inadequate drying.

Areas that are affected may change in colour and texture. These areas may become uncomfortable or painful if they are exposed to pressure for long periods of time.

What to do

- Use a moisturiser on your feet every day (not between the toes!)
- Use an emery type foot file or pumice gently 2-3 times per week
- Choose well-fitting footwear with a cushioned sole (see our leaflet on choosing footwear). Make sure there is plenty of width and depth for your toes to wiggle!
- For corns between the toes, try a silicone toe separator available from chemists and apply an astringent (such as surgical spirit) every day after bathing/ showering

Don't...

- Soak your feet
- Use grater type products
- Cut the hard areas with knives, razors or scissors
- Use medicated corn plasters as these contain acid that can burn the skin and cause a wound
- Ignore weeping / bleeding callous or corns –see your GP or practice nurse straight away

When to see a Podiatrist

If the corns or callous do not resolve themselves after following the above advice, it is recommended to seek the help of a Podiatrist. NHS Podiatry is available to people who have significant painful corns or callous *and* a medical condition that puts their foot at risk of developing complications. See our leaflet on 'Finding Footcare' to find out how to seek safe professional foot care outside of the NHS.