



Callus

Fact Sheet

A callus is a thickened area of dry, dead skin that often develops around the heel, the ball of the foot, or the toes. Callus has a rubbery feel and often appears with a pale yellow colour. If the skin is dry, the callus can feel very hard, have a white appearance, and may even develop cracks through it.

Callus can vary greatly in size and may span your entire heel, or just a coin-size patch on the side of your toe. As callus is formed from dead skin cells, areas of callus contain no nerve endings, meaning they have no feeling. Any sensations you experience when touching a callus is from the healthy underlying skin, though this sensation is dulled by the overlying callus.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of callus is the presence of hard, dry, rubbery skin that lacks sensation and can be uncomfortable, and sometimes even painful, to walk on.

What causes a callus to develop?

Callus develops in response to both repeated friction and excess pressure. By developing thicker and firmer skin in a high-impact area, your body is protecting itself from further damage like skin breaks, which would otherwise leave you vulnerable to infection. Hence, callus often doesn't cause any problems or pain. Some examples of causes include:

- Poorly fitting footwear that rubs against the skin
- High heels

- Any high-impact activities that load up the feet such as in running and jumping
- The way the foot itself functions (that places greater loads through certain areas of the foot)
- Increased weight
- Loss of protective fat pad in the feet
- Dry skin can be a predisposing factor to callus formation

Managing callus at home

When only a small amount of callus is present without any symptoms, most people will not require treatment as the callus is serving a protective function and is not causing them any problems. What you can try to do is identify the potential causes of your callus, and adjust these accordingly. A good example is wearing shoes that put greater pressure on the toes are forefoot, hence encouraging the build-up of callus. Switching to more time in shoes that are flatter, more supportive and have more cushioning that redistributes pressure can reduce the rate at which the callus develops.

Treatment is indicated when the skin beneath the callus becomes painful, uncomfortable, or limits your ability to comfortably wear shoes or carry out activities. This occurs when the callus becomes too thick and starts irritating the healthy underlying skin.

Under no circumstances should you try to cut the callus off by yourself using sharp instruments. Improper techniques can damage the healthy surrounding skin, resulting in cuts and the development of infection. If you have diabetes or any conditions that impact your ability to feel, it is also important that you seek help from your Podiatrist to help control any excess callus so that it does not further diminish your ability to feel.

How your Podiatrist can help

Your Podiatrist will be able to safely, effectively and painlessly remove the bulk of the callus in clinic, during your appointment. A small layer should be left intact to continue to protect your skin as per its original intent. Your Podiatrist will also help to determine the causes of

your callus and advise you on how to reduce the rate of its formation in the future.

Disclaimer: This document is an informative guide only and is not a tool for diagnosis or a replacement for a consultation with a Podiatrist. If you are concerned about your callus or it is causing you discomfort, we recommend that you see your Podiatrist for an accurate diagnosis and an appropriate management plan. Referrals are not required to see a Podiatrist.