



## Walking on Eggshells ... Kind Of

The calcaneus (heel bone) teams up with the talus, the lowest bone of the ankle, to form the subtalar joint — a foundational feature for walking, standing, flexing, and overall dynamic motion.

All bones can obviously fracture, but calcaneal fractures are frequently more complicated. The reason is that clean breaks are rare. The calcaneus is often compared to a hard-boiled egg: The layer of bone on the outside is hard and strong, but relatively thin, and the bone underneath is softer. When the outer shell is fractured, it may collapse and become fragmented, making repairs trickier, healing time lengthier, and the chances of long-term complications higher.

Heel bone fractures come in various forms:

- **Crushed heel injury.** This injury is typically caused by high-impact trauma such as a car accident or fall from height.
- **Intra-articular fracture.** These fractures drag the subtalar joint into the fray, and possibly other joints. Cartilage between the bones is damaged and may lead to posttraumatic arthritis and chronic pain.
- **Avulsion fracture.** The Achilles tendon or a ligament may pull a piece of bone off the calcaneus due to trauma.
- **Stress fracture.** Repetitive stress (e.g., high-volume running) may cause a gradual ramp-up of pain over the course of a few days or weeks. Stress fractures occur far less frequently than other heel fractures.

Typical symptoms of a calcaneal fracture, apart from a stress fracture, include the usual suspects: sharp pain, swelling, bruising, and inability to bear weight. Some fractures might be treated with conservative measures only; others may require surgery to achieve the best results. Positive outcomes will require patience too.

Don't delay a foot or ankle injury evaluation. Schedule an appointment at our office today.



# When Feet and Ankles Go Downhill

Downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, and snowboarding are exhilarating activities but can take a toll on feet and ankles. Here are a few examples:

**Ankle/foot sprains and fractures.** No surprise here, considering all the twisting, turning, and falling at unnatural angles. Boots that don't fit properly and tight bindings that don't release on time play major roles too.

**Skier's toe.** When boots are too tight or too loose, the big toe (or longest toe) and the front of the boot are on a repetitive collision course, causing bleeding under the nail. A discolored toenail and soreness result. It's not serious but will get worse without proper attention.

**Snowboarder's fracture (skiers aren't immune).** This injury frequently mimics an ankle sprain but is in fact a unique fracture of the outside of the ankle bone (talus). A misdiagnosis will complicate the situation and postpone healing. That's why it's important to schedule an appointment with our office rather than a general practitioner when possible. Feet and ankles are our specialty.

**Metatarsalgia.** Overworking the balls of the feet can cause pain and inflammation. Cross-country skiers are more susceptible due to all the pushing off they do. Skiers with flat feet or high arches are more vulnerable too.

**Achilles tendon rupture.** Overuse, weakness, and calf tightness all contribute to this common, painful, and disabling skiing/snowboarding injury.

**Tips:** Pace yourself — don't ski past 3:00 p.m., more than two miles per day, or three days in a row. Warm up before hitting slopes that are within your skill level. Don't go off-trail, stay hydrated, and upgrade your equipment as necessary, including properly fitting boots.

If your skiing/snowboarding adventure leaves your feet or ankles hurting, contact our office to find relief.

## Mark Your Calendars

**Feb. 1** No Politics Day: It will never be a national holiday; Congress would need to approve it.

**Feb. 2** Groundhog Day: Bill Murray was not a *Saturday Night Live* original. He debuted in season 2.

**Feb. 9** Super Bowl Sunday: 31 of 32 NFL teams reside in top 50 metropolitan areas (population-wise). Green Bay is the lone exception (158th).

**Feb. 14** Valentine's Day: Kevin James (Doug Heffernan of TV's *King of Queens*) and Gary Valentine (cousin Danny) are real-life brothers.

**Feb. 17** Presidents' Day: Ulysses S. Grant once earned a \$20 ticket for speeding his horse and buggy down a D.C. street.

**Feb. 22** Margarita Day: Margaritas are the most popular mixed drink in the U.S.

**Feb. 27** Polar Bear Day: There are five polar bear nations: Canada, Norway, Russia, Greenland, and the U.S. (thanks, Alaska!).





# Matters of the Heart

How the heart became associated with love is a mystery. Long ago, the heart may have gotten undeserved credit for feelings of love and attraction because its reaction to these is easily perceived — a higher heart rate. In fact, the heart was just following orders from the true mastermind, the brain (i.e., mesolimbic system).

And what was the origin of the heart symbol? It looks nothing like a human heart. Concocting love potions was a widespread practice among the ancient Romans. Seeds of the now-extinct silphium plant — closely related to fennel — were a key component, which were shaped like the hearts of the artwork and emoji worlds.



silphium seed on silver drachma, dated 500-480 BCE.

Feelings of love aside, the heart is a true workhorse. The average heart beats approximately 115,000 times per day, which in an average life span of 79 years amounts to 3 billion thumps, give or take 100,000 million. The heart works twice as hard as a sprinter's leg muscles, 24 hours a day!

The heart pumps blood out to a network of blood vessels over 60,000 miles long — a length approaching two and a half times around the equator. Every part of the human body receives oxygen due to the heart's heroics, except the corneas. The corneas have no blood vessels and obtain their oxygen via the aqueous humor, a liquid in the eye.

Heart cells stop dividing shortly after birth and simply grow larger as a person develops. The lack of cell division mitigates cell mutation and explains why the heart is rarely the origin point for cancer.

To give proper credit this Valentine's Day (or anytime), tell your significant other that he/she warms the cockles of your brain. Your heart is too busy to care.



## Roasted Lemon Oregano Shrimp

Serves 4

*A yummy Valentine's Day dinner idea, this fast and fancy, Greek-inspired dish can be served over pasta, rice, polenta, couscous, or all on its own.*

### Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh oregano leaves
- Finely grated zest of 1 large lemon
- Pinch of red pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons dry white wine
- Juice of 1 large lemon (about 3 tablespoons)
- 1 pound peeled and deveined, uncooked medium shrimp
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Cooked polenta, pasta, rice, or couscous for serving (optional)

### Directions

1. Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven, and heat to 400°F.
2. Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a medium saucepan over low heat. Stir in the garlic, oregano, red pepper flakes, and lemon zest, and stir over low heat for 2 minutes. Stir in the wine and lemon juice, and keep the mixture warm over very low heat.
3. Meanwhile, pat the shrimp dry, and transfer to a rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil, sprinkle generously with salt and black pepper, toss to evenly coat, and spread into an even layer.
4. Roast, stirring halfway through, until they just turn pink and opaque, 6 to 8 minutes total.
5. Remove the shrimp from the oven, transfer to the saucepan with the lemon and oregano sauce, and toss to combine. Serve immediately over cooked pasta, rice, couscous, or creamy polenta.

**Recipe note:** Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

Recipe courtesy of [www.thekitchn.com](http://www.thekitchn.com).



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Walking on Eggshells ...  
Kind Of  
See page one.

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# Keeping Diabetic Feet Warm

Most people aren't fond of cold feet. Warming them up from the outdoor chill or keeping them snug indoors is often a priority. But count on diabetes to complicate the simplest of plans.

For instance, those with diabetes should not apply electric blankets, heating pads, or hot water bottles directly against their feet, or get too close to fireplaces and space heaters. Diabetes can damage nerves near the foot's skin surface (peripheral neuropathy), impairing sensitivity. Diabetics may not be able to tell when the temperature is too high, making them more vulnerable to burn injuries as well as ulceration and infection.

Now, one could turn on an electric blanket prior to going to bed and then shut it off when hitting the hay. Or, keep a few layers of socks or towels between their feet and a heating pad. However, foot color should be monitored closely: light pink, fine; dark pink or red, danger zone.

But there are better, and safer, alternatives for cold feet. Diabetic socks are a great choice to keep feet warm. In addition, they come in a variety of thicknesses, rubber on the soles for a better grip while walking, and minus the tight elastic bands at the top of regular socks, supplying added comfort.

Fleece blankets are known for providing and maintaining warmth. You can throw one into the dryer for a few minutes before bedtime to make it toasty.

Properly fitting slippers with thick rubber soles are excellent for warmth and traction any time of the year.

