

# FOOT ODOUR & SWEATING

Foot odour, otherwise known as bromhidrosis, is an unpleasant and embarrassing condition for many patients. Developing foot odour often starts with excessive sweating of feet, with this sweat accumulating and affecting the skin (as opposed to being drawn away by good absorbent socks). Given that the feet contain over 250,000 sweat glands, and use these glands to effectively remove excess heat from our bodies, sweating around the feet is a completely natural occurrence.

## WHAT IS BEHIND THE FOOT ODOUR WE SMELL?

While regular sweating isn't unusually overly pungent, when sweat mixes with bacteria that break down the skin, unpleasant foot odour is produced. It may not just be bacteria contributing to the smell, but also yeast and fungus. Given the location of the feet and the dirty grounds that we often walk on, the presence of these organisms is not surprising or unexpected. Aside from the unpleasant odour, you may also develop rashes and skin reactions.



**Anything that causes increased sweating in the feet can increase foot odour if the right conditions are met. This may be:**

- Hot climates
- Working on your feet
- Long periods of physical activity
- A genetic predisposition to increased sweating
- Hormonal changes causing increased activity in sweat glands



## HOW IS FOOT ODOUR TREATED?

Initially, the goal is to eliminate any existing infections that are making your feet particularly odorous. After this, you want to control the excess sweating – or the sweat that is allowed to accumulate and linger around the feet. Ways to do this include:

- **Drying your feet well after showering or swimming, especially between the toes**
- **Removing shoes and socks after work or exercise to allow your feet to air dry**
- **Choosing socks that wick moisture away from the feet**
- **Cleaning your feet using an antiseptic agent**
- **Using an antifungal agent where a bacterial AND fungal infection is suspected**
- **Airing out shoes, and alternating between two pairs of shoes so you're not constantly wearing the same moist pair of shoes daily**
- **Changing socks frequently if they start to feel damp**

If the smell is an ongoing problem and managing the sweat does not produce the results you want, you may need to get a medicated cream from your GP to treat the infection. This will often have antibacterial and antifungal components.

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