

# Blisters - Treatment and Prevention

## ***Blister Problems***

Blisters can be a big problem for walkers, having trained hard and consistently for months all the hard work can be undone by getting a blister which puts you out for days or weeks.

Why should you put all that effort in and lose out, due to that small niggling (but VERY) painful blister on the bottom of your foot?

## ***What causes a Blister?***

Effective foot motion depends upon your shoe fitting tightly enough around your foot so the foot and shoe both work in the same range of motion and move in sync. The job of your sock is then to provide a thin separating layer between the two and allow some moisture to be wicked away from the skin keeping you cool and dry.

Blisters develop when the shoe fit is not perfect and friction occurs between the foot and the footwear.

When there is excessive pressure constantly in one area it causes a heat and friction build up that causes the area to become red and painful. This heat then separates the top layers of skin in that affected area. The body then rapidly produces fluid to fill that area, which results in a Blister.

The fluid produced is sterile but if the top layer is broken and the fluid escapes this is when infection can happen.

Hopefully this breakdown does not occur and infection does not sink in. However, even without this happening it can still take a few days to recover.

## ***Blister Prevention***

### **Can I prevent a blister?**

The simple answer is **YES**; as long as you act prior to exercise, once the blister has occurred you can't change it, only manage it.

Many things can be done to prevent the onset of blisters:

**Shoe fit:** Make sure your trainers or boots fit properly. If they don't and are too big for example, then the shoe may slip around slightly, cause friction and create a blister.

**Insoles:** If the boots are causing friction then an insole may help improve the fit and reduce rubbing. Many insoles are breathable, padded and designed not to cause friction as they are non-slipping.

**Socks:** Socks are an important factor in the prevention of blisters. Many socks now are highly breathable which keeps your foot cool and dry, so moisture and heat can't build up hence reducing friction. Many socks also have padded areas in "blister hot-zones" for added comfort, cushioning and protection.

**Blister plasters:** Specialist blister plasters like Compeed are also a great way of treating or helping to prevent the onset of blisters. These plasters lie on top of the affected area and providing a second skin which creates a friction resistant barrier so the blister can heal and the pain as well risk of infection is dramatically reduced.

## **Prevention of dehydration**

You can avoid becoming dehydrated by drinking plenty of water. The Food Standards Agency recommends that if you live in the UK (or somewhere with a similar climate) you should drink 1 to 2 litres (6 to 8 glasses) of water every day.

If you are active, or if the weather is particularly hot, there is a greater risk that you will become dehydrated. To prevent dehydrating, you should increase your fluid intake. You should also increase your fluid intake if you are ill with sickness and/or diarrhoea.

When exercising, you should drink up to one litre of water per hour of exercise, on top of your normal daily amount. This should be increased if you are exercising in warm conditions, as you will sweat more and fluid will be lost from your body more rapidly. You should always ensure that you are drinking enough water to replace lost fluids.

Do not drink large amounts of water over a short period of time, because that could lead to a serious condition called hyponatremia.

# Pathfinder March Walker Health Information

## Heat Related Illnesses

### **What is a heat related illness?**

Normally, the body has ways of keeping itself cool, by letting heat escape through the skin, and by evaporating sweat. If the body does not cool properly or does not cool enough, the victim may suffer a heat related illness.

### **What are the causes of a heat related illness?**

- Heat Exhaustion – Typically occurs when people exercise heavily or work in a warm, humid place where body fluids are lost through heavy sweating.
- Heat Stroke – The victim's temperature control system stops working.

### **Symptoms of heat exhaustion include**

- Very hot skin that feels 'flushed'
- Heavy sweating
- Dizziness and weakness or exhaustion
- Nausea
- Rapid heartbeat
- Confusion
- Urinating less often and much darker urine than usual

### **Symptoms of heat stroke include**

- High body temperature
- Skin may still be moist, or you could stop sweating and the skin may be red, hot and dry
- Rapid heart rate
- Rapid breathing
- Muscle cramps
- Confusion
- Lack of co-ordination
- Fits
- Headache
- Loss of consciousness

**If any of the above symptoms are encountered activity should be stopped and medical advice sought.**

### **How can I prevent heat related illness?**

- Dress for the heat. Wear lightweight, light coloured clothing.
- Wear a hat, apply sunscreen and stay in shade where possible.
- Keep hydrated. Avoid drinks containing caffeine and alcohol.
- Eat cold foods, such as salad and fruit, which have high water content.
- Spraying water on your skin or placing a damp cloth on the back of your neck will help you keep cool.
- Take regular breaks when engaged in physical activity on warm days. If you recognize that you, or someone else, are showing the signals of a heat related illness, stop activity and find a cool place.