



Cracked Heels

Patient Information

WHAT IS A CRACKED HEEL?

Cracked heels, or heel fissures, develop when the skin on the heels becomes very dry and thick, causing it to split or crack. These cracks can be painful and, in some instances, may bleed or become infected. Various factors can lead to cracked heels, such as dry skin, standing for long periods, wearing poorly fitting shoes, and underlying medical conditions.

COMMON CAUSES

- **Dry skin:** Most common cause; often worse in cold or dry weather
- **Prolonged standing:** Especially on hard floors, increases pressure on heels
- **Obesity:** Extra weight puts more pressure on the heel fat pad, causing it to expand and crack
- **Ill-fitting shoes or open-back footwear:** These don't support the heel, allowing the skin to expand and split
- **Medical conditions:**
 - Diabetes
 - Hypothyroidism
 - Eczema or psoriasis
 - Athlete's foot
 - Vitamin deficiencies (like zinc or vitamin E)

TREATMENT

- **Moisturize regularly:** Use thick, oil-based creams (look for urea, salicylic acid, or lactic acid)
- **Soak and exfoliate:** Warm water foot soak followed by gentle exfoliation with a pumice stone
- **Use heel balms:** Specifically designed to treat cracked heels and often contain keratolytic agents
- **Wear proper footwear:** Closed-back shoes with cushioning help reduce pressure on heels
- **Protective socks or heel cups:** These help retain moisture and reduce friction