

# TRENCH FOOT

## Wound Care Guide



### What is it?

It's not just something from war movies. Trench foot happens when your feet are stuck in cold, damp, or sweaty socks and shoes for too long, usually a couple of days or more. When that happens, the blood flow and feeling in your feet can take a hit. Skin can start to break down, which opens the door for infections.

This can happen if:

- You've been wearing wet or sweaty socks for a few days.
- Your shoes or boots don't get a chance to dry.
- You don't have a dry pair to change into.

### Signs and symptoms

#### Early signs

- Your feet feel tingly, itchy, or oddly heavy.
- The colour's off and may look red or bluish.
- Walking feels more difficult than usual.



#### Later signs

- Feet look pale or white, feel cold and clammy
- Numbness or sharp pain when you try to warm them up
- Super sensitive to touch
- Swelling, blisters, or open sores



Nonfreezing cold injury (trench foot).  
Photo courtesy of Ken Zafren, MD

### How it's treated

The good news is that trench foot is treatable when you catch it early.

Treatment can include:

- Slowly rewarming the feet
- Wearing dry socks and shoes
- Cleaning your feet to reduce risk of infection
- Cleaning and treating open wounds

If there are signs of infection, you might need:

- A swab to be collected from an open wound
- Prescription antibiotics
- Tetanus booster
- Over the counter pain medication

### When to reach out

Don't wait until you can't walk. If you're unsure or your feet just aren't getting better, connect with a nurse or another health care worker. They can help you get the care you need without judgement.

### Talk to a nurse

**Call:** 1-800-265-7293 ext. 7006 Mon-Fri, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Email:** [clientcommunitysupport@wdgpublichealth.ca](mailto:clientcommunitysupport@wdgpublichealth.ca)

**[wdgpublichealth.ca](http://wdgpublichealth.ca)**



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