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I have quite an active life and enjoy walking and hiking –but I always get blisters and sore spots on my feet. What can I do to stop this?

Profoot's Foot Doctor, William Hutchings of the Diss Podiatry and Chiropody Clinic, Norfolk says:

Blisters are among the most debilitating minor injuries an athlete can get. A tiny little blister, though small in size, can be painful enough to keep your boots off for days.

Blisters are caused by friction between your feet and your boots, so eliminating this chafing is the first step to pain-free feet. Using Vaseline or cream works for some people, but you need to get to the root of the problem rather than just treating the symptom. Try these suggestions.

- **When you buy new boots, make sure there's ample room in the toe box area:** The area in the front of the shoe should be wide and deep enough so that your toes aren't restricted by the end, or the sides of the shoe and that you can move them comfortably. When in doubt, go for a slightly bigger pair rather than buying a pair that feels a little snug. As when your feet get warm they increase in size by up to half a size. If your problem is tender corns on your toes, try using a Soft Gel Corn Wrap, which slips on to fit snugly and securely round your toe, whilst reducing all pressure and friction to the area.
- **Make do with a larger shoe:** Shoes get slightly wider as they increase in size, so if you go up a size you may have plenty of room in the toes but less support around your instep and heel. If this is the case, use a flat insole to take up some of the extra room. If you feel you need additional support around the heel and arches, try a moulded insole with an arch support or a Heel Cup. If you find the back of the heel is rubbing which is sometimes the case use a gel heel plaster.
- **Choose the right pair of socks:** If you've been doubling up on socks, this may be making your blisters worse, as two socks can bunch up and cause even more friction between your feet and your boot. But if you have to use two pairs, use a softer pair in contact with the skin eg a cotton pair inside a wool pair. Always remember to buy quality socks when using them for activities.
- **Treat your blisters carefully:** If you get a blister, keep it clean by gently washing it with soap and water, but don't pop it. If it fills up with blood, see your podiatrist. You can protect a blister while exercising by covering it with a plaster. With the blister protected, you should be able to do a moderate workout. Try using a Profoot Soft Gel 'Corn Wrap' or 'Toe Protector' over the 'dressed' blister which will redistribute pressure and friction from the tender area.