Don’t perform surgery for a bunion or hammertoes without symptoms.
Foot surgery for cosmetic reasons is not supported by medical research. Symptoms such as pain and limitations of activity are the most common reasons to pursue bunion or hammertoe surgery. Patients having surgery for bunions and hammertoes are at risk for a wide range of complications such as nerve damage, infection, bone healing problems and toe stiffness.

Don’t use shoe inserts for symmetric flat feet or high arches in patients without symptoms.
Symmetric flat feet or high arches are common conditions, and generally they are asymptomatic. The development of the arch is not related to external supports, and no evidence exists that any support is needed in asymptomatic patients.

Don’t perform surgery for plantar fasciitis before trying six months of non-operative care.
With six months of consistent, non-operative treatment, plantar fasciitis will resolve up to 97% of the time. Surgery has a much lower rate of success and has the added possibility of post-operative complications.

Avoid X-ray evaluation of the foot and ankle without standing (weightbearing) in the absence of injury.
The functional position of the foot and ankle is one of weightbearing. When compared to non-weightbearing X-rays, deformities of the forefoot, midfoot and hindfoot have been shown to increase on weightbearing X-rays. In addition, narrowing of the ankle joint space on standing X-rays is associated with symptoms of arthritis. Therefore, weightbearing X-rays, when possible, give the most accurate assessment of the functional bony anatomy of the foot and ankle.

Don’t use alcohol injections for Morton’s neuromas.
Alcohol can permanently damage the nerve, but without effective pain relief. At five year follow-up, alcohol injection for Morton’s neuroma has both a high recurrence rate and a high rate of complications, including bruising, scar formation, dysesthesia, severe pain and infection.
How This List Was Created

In order to formulate this list, the American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society Evidence-Based Medicine Committee reviewed the society position statements on foot and ankle care and solicited expert opinion from specialty leaders including the AOFAS Board of Directors to prepare an initial list of topics for the Choosing Wisely® website. The Board of Directors of the AOFAS reviewed the initial list and approved five statements for further development. The Evidence-Based Medicine Committee members reviewed the scientific literature on each statement and presented draft statements with supporting evidence to the committee for discussion. Committee members also reviewed the Choosing Wisely® campaign website to ensure that there was no duplication in proposed content and for proper formatting. The committee evaluated each statement and edited the statement wording and supporting references. Once consensus was reached, the 2014 list was finalized by committee members. The finalized list was then reviewed and approved by the AOFAS Board of Directors. The AOFAS disclosure and conflict of interest policies may be found at www.aofas.org/education/Pages/Education.aspx.

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Sources


About the ABIM Foundation

The mission of the ABIM Foundation is to advance medical professionalism to improve the health care system. We achieve this by collaborating with physicians and physician leaders, medical trainees, health care delivery systems, payers, policymakers, consumer organizations and patients to foster a shared understanding of professionalism and how they can adopt the tenets of professionalism in practice.

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