

Five Things Physicians and Patients Should Question

1

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.

2

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.

3

Don't perform surgery for plantar fasciitis before trying at least 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 the possibility of post-operative complications with continued pain.

4

Avoid non-weightbearing X-ray evaluation of the foot and ankle when patients are able to stand.

The functional position of the foot and ankle is one of weightbearing. Foot and ankle deformity may be decreased or absent on non-weightbearing x-rays as compared to weightbearing x-rays. Therefore, foot and ankle disorders including flatfeet, ligamentous injuries of the midfoot, ankle arthritis, bunions, and hammertoes that are well-demonstrated on weightbearing x-rays may be underestimated or not appreciated at all on non-weightbearing x-rays. Therefore, when possible, weightbearing x-rays of the foot and ankle are preferred in order to give the most accurate assessment of the functional bony anatomy of the foot and ankle.

5

Due to recently published evidence related to alcohol injections for Morton's neuroma, the AOFAS has withdrawn this recommendation. The topic of alcohol injections remains somewhat controversial with conflicting reports in the literature. Some of the more recent studies are moderately supportive, but long term efficacy remains a concern. Therefore, the AOFAS does not have a formal position as to whether alcohol injections for Morton's neuroma are efficacious or should be avoided.

6

Avoid use of orthopaedic therapeutic biologics including platelet rich plasma and stem cell treatment for foot and ankle problems without first considering established, conventional treatment options.

Orthopaedic therapeutic biologics (orthobiologics) comprise a variety of tissue grafts and autologous blood products that include platelet rich plasma (PRP) and mesenchymal stem cell treatment. Surgeons bear responsibility to offer their patients efficacious, safe and cost-effective treatments. Orthobiologic treatment can be costly and may not be covered by insurance. Patients can become financially vulnerable especially when pursuing orthobiologic treatment that extends beyond its intended use, scientific support, or regulatory approval. Surgeons should be well-versed in the scientific basis, techniques, potential risks, and regulatory status of orthobiologic treatments. Furthermore, surgeons should review the risks, benefits, and anticipated efficacy of orthobiologic therapy with patients in advance. Orthobiologic treatment options represent a rapidly expanding area of interest for both patients and providers, but remain relatively new and understudied. There is ongoing need for investigative research.

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 to prepare an initial list of topics for the *Choosing Wisely* website. 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. The finalized list was then reviewed and approved by the AOFAS Board of Directors.

For more information, visit www.aofas.org.

Sources

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About the the American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society

The American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society (AOFAS) is a medical specialty society of more than 2,400 orthopaedic surgeons and allied health practitioners who specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of injuries, diseases, and other conditions of the foot and ankle. As the premier global organization for foot and ankle care, AOFAS delivers exceptional events and resources for continuous education, funds and promotes innovative research, and broadens patient understanding of foot and ankle conditions and treatments. AOFAS is proud to partner with the *Choosing Wisely*® campaign, as it complements the Society's public education, evidence-based medicine and patient outcomes initiatives to improve the quality of patient care.

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