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Step Ahead Foot & Ankle Clinic

Corns and Calluses

Corns and calluses are areas of thick skin that result from excessive pressure or friction over a bony prominence. When these areas develop on the bottom of the foot they are called calluses. When they occur on the top of the toes they are called corns. They can also occur between the toes, the back of the heels and the top of the foot. The thickening of the skin is a normal body response to pressure or friction. Often times they are associated with a projection of bone called a bone spur. Not all areas of thickened skin are corns or calluses. The callused area can be very discreet and have a "core" or they can be more dispersed covering a larger area. These areas can become quite painful as the skin thickens. Professional treatment options can include, routine debridements, which help to reduce the pain only temporarily. The corn or callus will reoccur if the pressure on the skin is not reduced. Take care using OTC acids for self-care, they can cause a burn and don't do this if your diabetic. However, I do recommend a gentler way to reduce the thick skin utilizing a fissure kit, which contains a potent debriding cream. Off-loading, the bone with a rigid functional shoe insert referred to as an orthotic will transfer weight to a different part of the foot. Occasionally a soft Pedor insert with accommodation for the corn or callus will be helpful. Silicone padding and sleeves will also be effective treatment along with a cortisone injection to reduce the bursitis. If your lifestyle or age does not agree with conservative treatment then surgery is available for those who feel their activities of daily living have been affected. Surgery is directed at correcting the alignment of the offending bone. Cutting out the callous will only make the condition worse if the bone is not corrected.