

# NO AGONY FOR DA-FEET

a comic guide to basic foot health



Written and illustrated by Jen Leach

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from the Program in Narrative Medicine  
at Columbia University.

Learn more & order additional copies at

[www.dafeet.org](http://www.dafeet.org)

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**No Agony for Da-Feet**





I'M SO DEPRESSED.

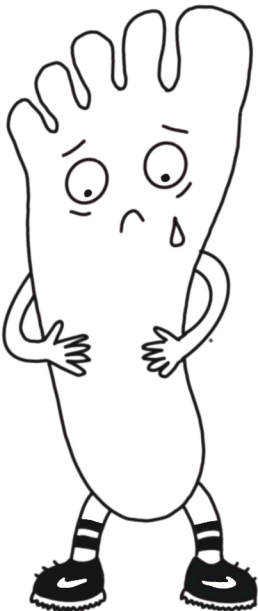
NO ONE PAYS ATTENTION TO ME, AND WHEN  
THEY DO, THEY JUST MAKE FUN OF ME,  
CALLING ME UGLY AND STINKY!

MAYBE I'M NOT AS PRETTY AS OTHER PARTS OF  
YOUR BODY, LIKE YOUR EYES OR YOUR MOUTH. BUT  
I DO SUCH IMPORTANT WORK, KEEPING YOU  
BALANCED AND HELPING YOU GET AROUND.

AND WHAT THANKS DO I GET?  
ALL YOU DO IS STEP ON ME!

MAYBE IF I TRY REALLY HARD, I CAN  
SHOW YOU SOME WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT  
ME, JUST AS I SUPPORT YOU.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?  
ARE YOU WITH ME?



# FEET ARE PHENOMENAL!

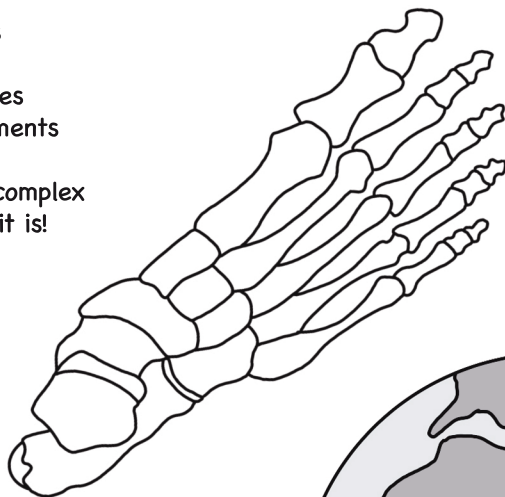
WE DO SO MUCH MORE THAN  
HELP YOU GET AROUND!



The human foot has

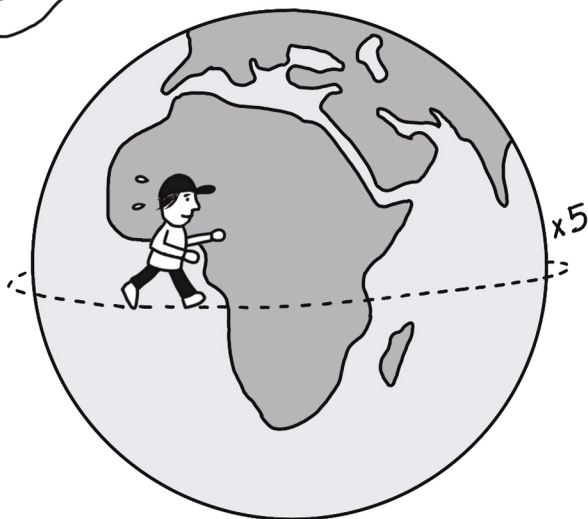
26 bones  
33 joints  
19 muscles  
107 ligaments

What a complex  
machine it is!



The average adult walks  
roughly **110,000 miles**  
(over 200 MILLION steps)  
in their lifetime!

That's enough to circle  
the Earth **FIVE** times!



## ASK THE EXPERT

"Your foot is the foundation for the rest of your body. Your foot, knee, hip, and back are all part of a system. If you have a problem originating in one area, it can affect the others."

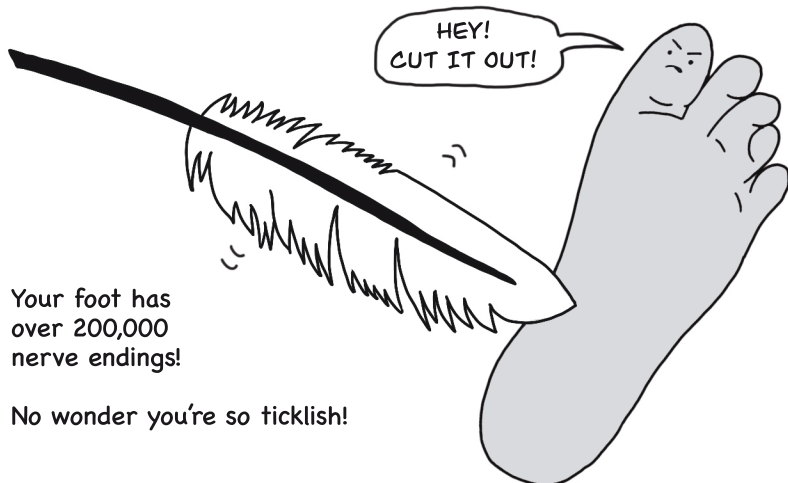
Serena, medical student



With each step, your feet bear heavy loads: 1.5 times your body weight when you walk, and 5 to 7 times your weight when you run.

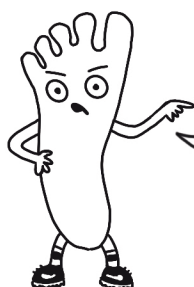


Feet sweat about a pint of liquid a day, which helps to regulate your body temperature. They have more sweat glands per square inch than even your armpits! Eww!



Your foot has over 200,000 nerve endings!

No wonder you're so ticklish!

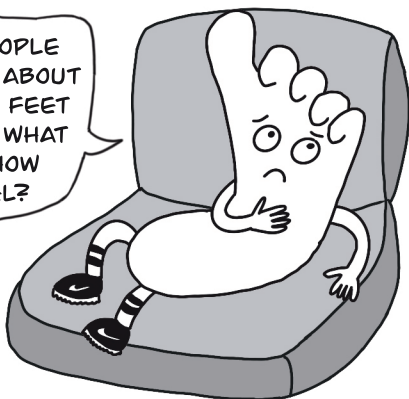


NOW THAT YOU KNOW HOW IMPORTANT YOUR FEET ARE, WHY DON'T YOU DO MORE TO TAKE CARE OF US?

# IT'S COMPLICATED.



HMPH! PEOPLE  
JUST CARE ABOUT  
HOW THEIR FEET  
LOOK. BUT WHAT  
ABOUT HOW  
WE FEEL?



When it comes to taking care of their feet, most people don't do much, maybe putting on some moisturizing lotion, trimming their toenails, or getting pedicures.

**FACT: UNTREATED FOOT PAIN CAN LEAD TO PROBLEMS IN YOUR**

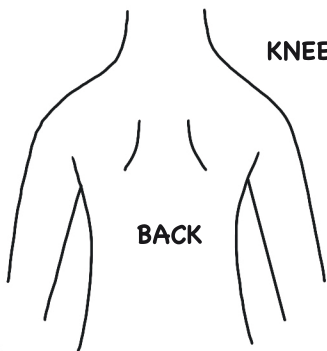
**KNEES**



**JOINTS**



**BACK**



## ASK THE EXPERT



"If you injure your hand, you can put it in your pocket. But if your foot hurts, everything is bad. Being off your feet is a BIG disruption to your life!"  
Dr. G, orthopedic surgeon

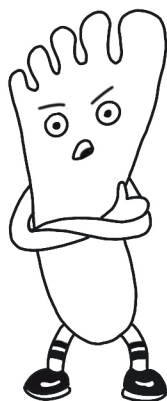


# FOOT PAIN CAN SLOW YOU DOWN

and mess you up!

FOOT PAIN CAN LIMIT YOUR DAILY ACTIVITIES AND DECREASE YOUR OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE!

IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, LISTEN TO THESE REAL PEOPLE WITH REAL FEET!



Jillian, nurse

I had to take 12 weeks off from work because I'm a nurse. I couldn't drive because the surgery was on my right foot. I can only wear athletic shoes now.

I have to say no to things that require a lot of walking, like going to the zoo with my niece. I want to enjoy an active retirement with travel, but I am afraid I won't be able to.



Christine, grants administrator

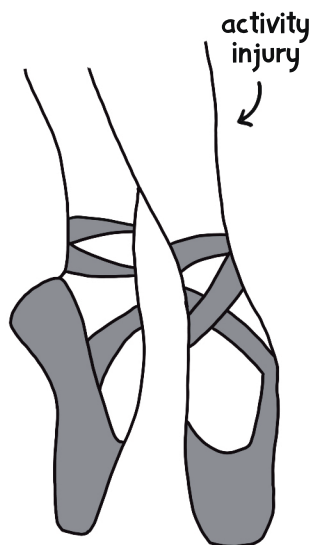
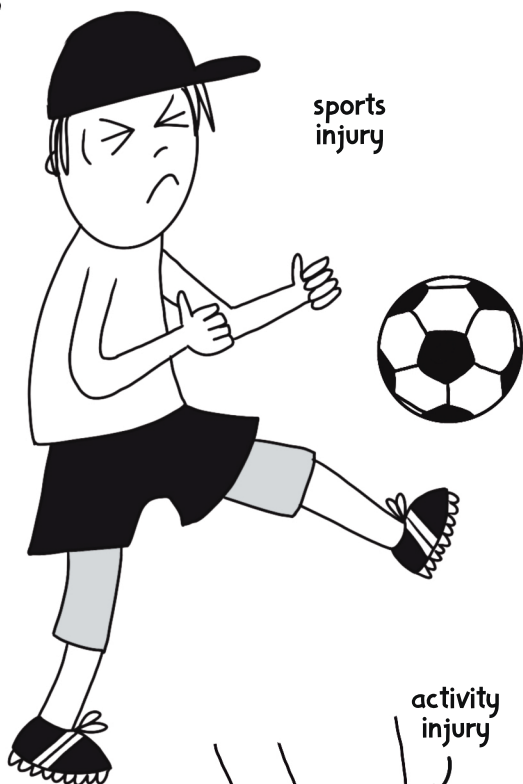
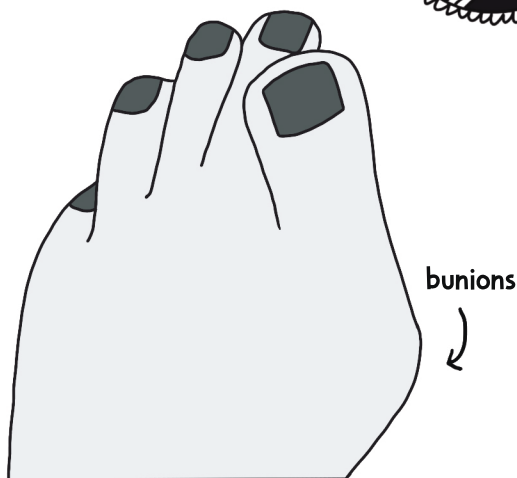
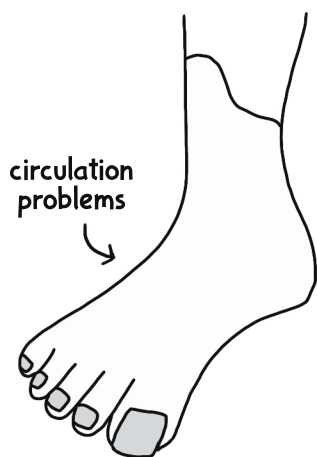


Mayra, IT business analyst

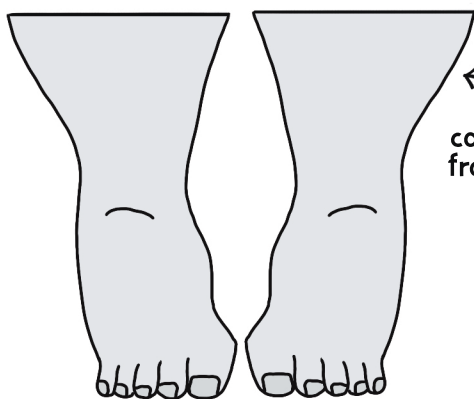
I got a medical discharge from the Army because of my back pain, and soon I was also struggling with foot pain.

I was told to stretch and wear supportive shoes with custom insoles, but after ten years of trying every possible remedy, the pain was so unbearable that I had to get surgery.

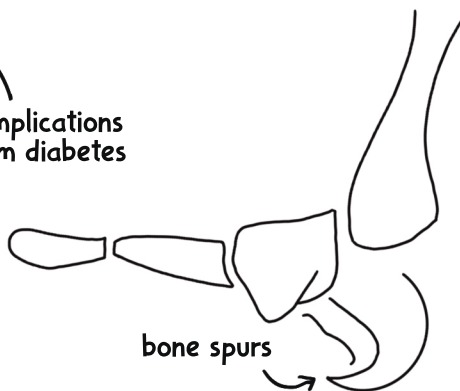
# COMMON PROBLE



# MS OF THE FOOT

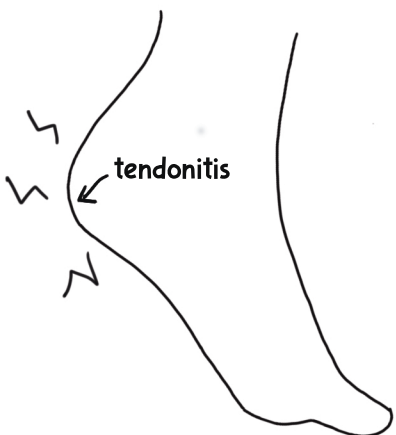


complications  
from diabetes

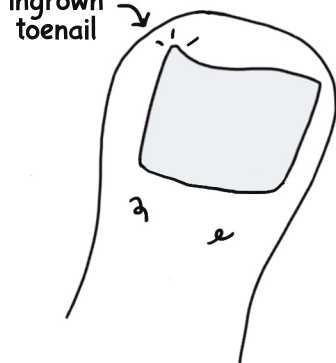


bone spurs

ingrown  
toenail



tendonitis



metatarsalgia  
(pain at the ball of the foot)



STOP...  
hammertoes!



(can't touch this)



IF YOU GOT A PROBLEM,  
YO, WE'LL SOLVE IT. CHECK  
OUT FOOT EXPERTS WHO  
KNOW HOW TO TREAT IT!  
(ICE, ICE, BABY!)



# MEET THE EXPERTS!

If you have a foot issue, don't suffer in silence. These professionals can help!

## Primary Care Provider



START WITH ME! IF I CAN'T HELP, I'LL REFER YOU TO A SPECIALIST!

(Most primary care providers only get about two weeks of training in the musculoskeletal system, which includes the foot, in medical school!)

## Podiatrist



I SPENT OVER THREE YEARS STUDYING THE ANATOMY AND ISSUES OF THE FOOT. I WILL PROBABLY TRY LOTS OF OTHER OPTIONS BEFORE RECOMMENDING SURGERY, WHICH I CAN ALSO DO. IF YOUR CONDITION IS CHRONIC, YOU MAY SEE ME FOR MANY YEARS.

## Orthopedic Surgeon



I COMPLETED FOUR YEARS OF MEDICAL SCHOOL FOLLOWED BY A SPECIALTY IN ORTHOPEDICS. I AM AN EXPERT IN THE MECHANICS OF THE FOOT AND HOW THEY AFFECT OTHER PARTS OF YOUR BODY.

## Physical Therapist



I MAY HELP PREVENT YOUR NEED FOR SURGERY OR HELP YOU RECOVER FROM IT. I'LL GIVE YOU EXERCISES TO DO AT HOME TO REGAIN YOUR STRENGTH AND RANGE OF MOTION.





# WHAT CAN YOU DO?

We asked the experts: How can you take care of your own feet?



Examine your feet regularly, and let your doctor know if you notice any changes.

Be careful while playing high-impact sports, especially if you don't normally do so.



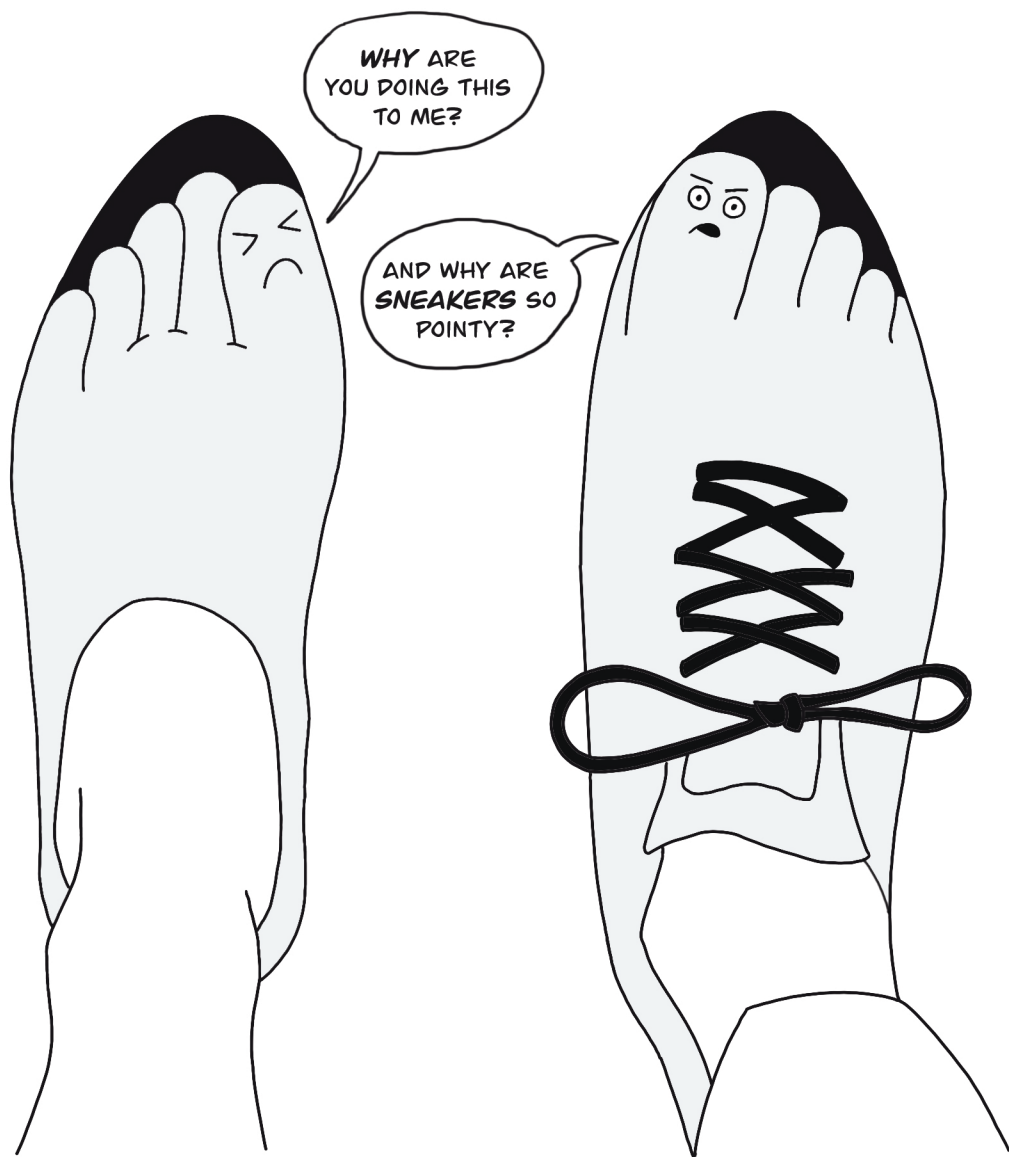
Stretch before you exercise—especially your calves.



HEY!  
WANNA KNOW A  
REALLY EASY  
THING YOU CAN DO  
FOR YOUR FEET?

# DON'T SMUSH US IN TIGHT OR POINTY SHOES!

Wearing shoes that crowd your toes can lead to deformities like bunions and hammertoes, along with blisters and other problems. It's just not worth it!




# AND WHAT ABOUT HEELS?

FOOT PAIN IS NOT SEXY!

People who spend lots of time in heels often experience backaches and neck and shoulder pain. They can also develop bunions, hammertoes, achilles tendonitis and other problems — not to mention, injuries from falling!





### ASK THE EXPERT

"Think of shoes the way you would think of food. These types of shoes are like dessert. If you wear them every day, there **WILL** be consequences!"

- Dr. F., podiatrist

OK, SO NOW WE KNOW WHICH SHOES ARE BAD FOR OUR FEET. SO WHICH SHOES WON'T DAMAGE US? LET'S FIND OUT!



# GET ON THE GOOD FOOT!

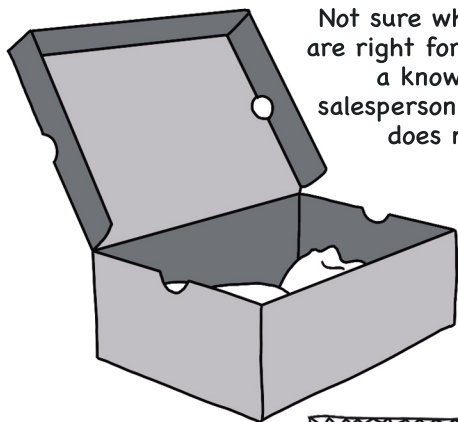
## CHOOSE YOUR SHOES WISELY!

Look for shoes that

- ☒ are big enough to fit your foot
- ☒ are wide enough so they don't squish your toes
- ☒ provide adequate support for your arch and the ball of your foot
- ☒ can be adjusted or tightened (with straps, buckles, or laces)
- ☒ have cushioning for shock absorption
- ☒ have a slightly elevated heel
- ☒ match both the activity that you're doing AND your foot type



Look for socks that don't slide or create friction, which can lead to blisters or calluses.



Not sure which shoes are right for you? Ask a knowledgeable salesperson. One size does not fit all!

### ASK THE EXPERT

"We have not evolved for walking on concrete and hardwood floors. The right footwear helps our bodies endure."

Dr. G., orthopedic surgeon

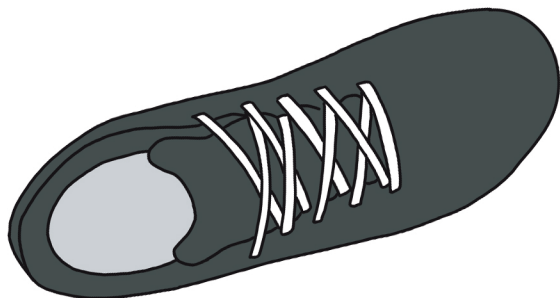


# LET'S GO SHOPPING!

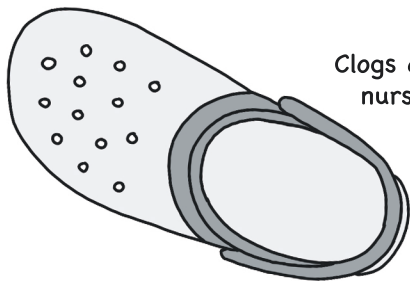
COMFY DOESN'T HAVE TO BE UGLY.

Not all comfy shoes are ugly, but SO MANY of them are! You may need to do a bit of research to find the best ones to match your foot and your personal style, but don't give up. Comfort can be stylish!

Your feet will thank you later!



Your feet are not pointy! Look for sneakers that won't squish your toes.



Clogs are not just for nurses and chefs!



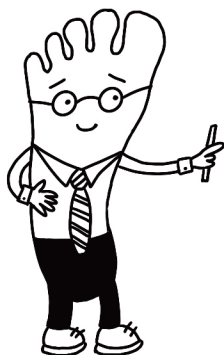
I never did cuteness over comfort. I live in New York City. My comfy old boots are worn in and delicious!



-Lemny, artist and therapist

# WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

LET'S REVIEW, SHALL WE?



1. So much of your foot health is within your control!
2. Picking the right shoes can make a big difference.
3. If you have foot pain, don't ignore it!
4. At your next checkup, ask your provider to examine your feet.

I have a new confidence. I am back to being active. My stance is different. I am balanced and steady and I have a whole new body awareness.

Getting treatment for my foot pain was part of a larger journey of realizing how often I would sideline my health and happiness in the name of serving others. Take the time to seek treatment, even if it involves surgery.

-Renée, administrator,  
theatre director & collaborator



**Check us out for more foot facts:  
[www.dafeet.org](http://www.dafeet.org)**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Big big thanks go to my advisor, Dr. Ben Schwartz, for his guidance and encouragement.

# Why feet?

Most people don't really pay much attention to their feet. and we think this needs to change.

We spoke with dozens of experts: doctors, medical students, and, most important, everyday people with real feet. Patients shared stories about how their foot pain (and eventual surgeries) disrupted their lives.

Your tour guide for this comic is a foot with very hurt feelings. He will try to convince you to take simple steps (ha!) to prevent injury and have happy, healthy feet.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jen Leach is a three-time bunion surgery survivor and recent foot health evangelist. Her books include *SIDE DEFECTS*, *BOOBLESS*, and *The Agony of Dafeet* (a personal comic about her foot surgeries).

Find her at [linktr.ee/jenleach](https://linktr.ee/jenleach).



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