

## Foot odor <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

Thanks for the column and past advice. My wife recently began complaining of foot odor (her own). I suggested washing her feet several times a day and to use a deodorant. She's done this for about a week now but still complains about the odor. Please solve this dilemma. Thanks a bunch!!

— Married to Bigfoot

## Answer

Dear Married to Bigfoot,

How thoughtful of you to look out for your wife's podiatric health, as well as both of your olfactory comfort. Your wife has a number of options for keeping her feet smelling fresh (or at least smelling less), but first it may make sense to consider the causes of offending odor. As you may know, perspiration usually has a distinctive odor but generally not an offensive one. Offensive odor could be caused by naturally occurring bacteria that proliferates on skin and clothing in sweaty conditions. Alternatively, maybe she has experienced other changes recently. Other known factors in determining body scents are diet, genetics, hygiene, and overall health. For some general tips to address foot odor, read on.

To start, your wife could wash her feet with a mild, antibacterial soap. Body odor typically is caused when bacteria that normally lives on the skin becomes overgrown. By washing with antibacterial soap, she may help reduce the amount of odor-causing bacteria on or around her feet. Dusting cornstarch on her feet before getting into socks and shoes can help to keep them dry (moisture encourages bacteria to grow and flourish). Another trick she might try is soaking her feet daily in warm water with white vinegar or Epsom salts, which can both help reduce bacteria on the skin.

To best prevent odor, since sweat is a factor, keeping feet both *clean* and *dry* is crucial. On the dryness front, wearing cotton socks instead of nylons or other synthetic materials may help. For shoes that have tread a number of miles in their time, changing the insoles in the bottoms of her shoes may give them new (odor-free) life. Many people recommend not wearing the same shoes

every single day, because shoes need time to air out so they don't become too smelly themselves. Likewise, wearing shoes that allow air flow can be a helpful tactic to keep feet dry all day long. She can also try to disinfect her shoes by washing the insoles or using a disinfectant spray on them. It's key that the insoles are completely dry before she tries to wear the shoes again. If the problem really bothers her, and she's tried various home remedies, a trip to a health care provider could be in order to learn more about the cause of the odor as well as potential solutions.

Alice!

Category:

[General Health](#) [2]

[Body Maintenance](#) [3]

[Body Emissions](#) [4]

## Related questions

[Why do I have to brush my teeth?!](#) [5]

[Okay to reuse bath towels?](#) [6]

[Are washcloths and other body scrubbers bacteria factories?](#) [7]

## Resources

[Medical Services \(Morningside\)](#) [8]

[Medical Services \(CUIMC\)](#) [9]

Published date:

Dec 03, 1995

Last reviewed on:

Nov 15, 2019

## Footer menu

- ▼ [Contact Alice!](#)
  - [Content Use](#)
  - [Media Inquiries](#)
  - [Comments & Corrections](#)
- ▼ [Syndication & Licensing](#)
  - [Licensing Q&As](#)
  - [Get Alice! on Your Website](#)
  - [Full Site Syndication](#)
  - [Link to Go Ask Alice!](#)

**Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.**

If you are in an urgent situation, please [visit our Emergency page](#) to view a list of 24 hour support

services and hotlines.

---

**Source URL:** <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/foot-odor-1>

**Links**

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/foot-odor-1>
- [2] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/general-health>
- [3] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/body-maintenance>
- [4] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/body-emissions>
- [5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/why-do-i-have-brush-my-teeth-1>
- [6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/okay-reuse-bath-towels>
- [7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/are-washcloths-and-other-body-scrubbers-bacteria-factories-0>
- [8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-morningside>
- [9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-cuimc>