

CHIROPODISTS

Laura Swaffield explains the role of the foot-care professional.

A state registered chiropodist (SRCh) has taken a three-year, degree level course on feet and legs. Many now call themselves 'podiatrists'.

Painful or deformed feet can make people of any age less mobile and independent than they could be. In younger people, especially those with conditions which affect posture, gait or foot health, good care can prevent major problems later on. And the wrong footwear, at any age, can cause problems or make them worse.

So do make a point of checking the feet of the person you care for, to spot potential problems like wounds or sores, infections, hard skin, warts, or uncut toe-nails.

People in special need might include those with arthritis or rheumatism, those with reduced sensation in their feet (this includes diabetics), nerve damage, or poor circulation (including heart conditions), people whose condition affects the way they walk, and immobile people (who can develop

nasty pressure sores on their heels).

The SRCh can give advice on footwear and foot care, prescribe special shoes if needed, treat sores, ulcers, foot injuries, corns, calluses, hammer toes and bunions – and even carry out minor surgery.

Chiropodists work in NHS community clinics, hospitals, GP surgeries or people's own homes. You may find specialist clinics listed in the 'phone book under your local health authority or trust. If not, ask the main office how to contact the chiropodist service.

But be warned: the service is very overstretched. In practice, old people get the lion's share (about 80%), followed by children, pregnant women and people with mental or physical handicaps. You may face a very long waiting list.

A private chiropodist could therefore be a good investment. Look in Yellow Pages. Make absolutely sure you choose someone who is state registered. Check for the letters SRCh.



SALLY AND RICHARD GREENHILL

Chiropodists treat painful or deformed feet, sometimes with minor surgery.

USEFUL INFORMATION

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