

## Lower limb injuries in the workplace



**W**orkplace injuries result from both ongoing biomechanical and structural problems as well as from localised injury and workplace accidents. Lower limb injuries account for 20% of workplace injuries in Australia every year. The most common foot injuries include Achilles tendonitis, plantar fasciitis, hallux valgus and stress fractures.

Risk factors for workplace injuries include:

- Workers who regularly stand or walk in excess of 4 hours at a time without a break. Overuse injuries are prevalent among this group and proper foot care is paramount to relieving discomfort and preventing more serious injury. When feet are sore and fatigued a worker is at increased risk of a trip and fall injury and so supportive footwear and/or orthotics as well as patient education can reduce risk of injury.
- Walking on hard surfaces, such as concrete, which lacks flexibility and multiplies ground force with every step. Workers in this group can benefit from cushioned soles for shock absorption and possibly also custom orthotics to provide additional arch support.
- Wearing shoes that are unsupportive or lack appropriate protection for workplace conditions. Construction workers may often come to mind in this category, however construction workers are required to wear protective shoes on all building sites in Australia, so actually, the key risk group in this area is retail workers wearing unsupportive fashion footwear.

**W**hile a workplace can reduce the risk of injuries to employees by following occupational health and safety guidelines and keeping employees informed and educated about the types of workplace injuries and how to avoid them, specialist care can often benefit both employer and employee. Podiatric treatment for the prevention of workplace injuries can include biomechanical assessment, advice on appropriate footwear, the fitting of custom orthotics to provide additional support and other therapies to relieve the burden of wear and tear.



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