

Foot care and management of abrasions and simple cuts

Foot care

In the event of prolonged contact with water, the most likely foot conditions are macerated skin (softening and whitening) and infections, including fungal infections.

The following advice will help prevent and treat foot problems:

- When possible, air dry and elevate your feet as often as possible
- Exchange wet shoes and socks (non-cotton socks are best) for dry ones as often as possible and at least daily
- Thoroughly clean and dry wet feet after showering
- Don't wear overly restrictive footwear
- Wear covered footwear with non-slip soles
- Check feet at least once a day for cuts, cracked skin, infections or other symptoms
- Obtain medical advice if there is evidence of infection or other concerning symptoms

Trench foot, a severe type of immersion foot occurs when the feet are constantly wet for long periods of time. Symptoms include tingling, pain and swelling. The development of trench foot typically requires both wet and cold conditions and is unlikely at water temperatures of 18°C and above.

A warm water version of trench foot can occur and is known as Paddy's foot. The development of Paddy's foot usually requires constant foot immersion in water for 2 days or more. Immersion foot is unlikely in emergency responders if the above advice is followed.

Management of abrasions and simple cuts

- Rinse the abrasion or wound under flowing clean water. If you do not have access to clean water wipe wound with antiseptic wipes and apply appropriate antiseptic.
- Remove any debris using clean or sterile gauze.
- Apply an antiseptic such as Betadine.
- If there is embedded dirt, Savlon may be used as it contains an antiseptic and a surfactant to help remove debris. Don't scrub at embedded dirt – if there is a lot seek medical advice.
- Cover the cleaned wound with an appropriate non-stick sterile dressing. Change the dressing according to the manufacturer's instructions.