



Skin Cancer: Feet Aren't Immune

About the Doctor

Eric S. Harmelin, DPM



Dr. Harmelin grew up in South Florida. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Florida. He then went on to earn his Doctor of Podiatric Medicine from the Barry University School of Podiatric Medicine in Miami. He completed a three-year surgical residency at South Miami Hospital/Baptist Health Systems in South Miami, Florida, and began private practice in 2000 in Fort Lauderdale. Dr. Harmelin joined the team at Annapolis Foot and Ankle Center in 2010.

Dr. Harmelin is a licensed podiatric surgeon in Maryland and is board-certified by The American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery. He is also affiliated with the Maryland Podiatric Medical Association and the American Podiatric Medical Association. He is the chief of Podiatric Surgery at Anne Arundel Medical Center. Dr. Harmelin has a special interest in wound care/limb salvage and reconstructive surgery.

In his spare time, he enjoys playing tennis and spending time with his family.

The sun's ultraviolet rays make exposed, unprotected skin vulnerable to skin cancer, including feet, which often get overlooked. For feet, however, sunlight has major competition, such as viruses, chronic inflammation or irritation, exposure to chemicals, and genetics.

Basal cell carcinoma (BCC) is the most frequently occurring and least aggressive skin cancer and most often develops on sun-exposed areas, including the ankles and tops of feet. BCCs may appear as pearly bumps or scaly patches that might ooze or crust. If ignored, they can be destructive but rarely spread.

Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) is the most common form of skin cancer afflicting the feet. Left untreated, it can eventually metastasize. SCC may present as a small, scaly bump that looks inflamed, possibly accompanied by cracking, bleeding, or itchiness. It can be mistaken for a plantar wart, eczema, fungal infection, or ulcer, which is why any persistent changes in a person's foot merit a look at our office.

Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer, accounting for only a small percentage of skin cancers but the vast majority of fatalities. It often starts as an irregular mole or dark spot — 30% are red or pink — including on the soles, between toes, and under toenails. The ABCDEs of melanoma include:

- **A**symmetry: If the lesion is divided into "halves," the halves don't match.
- **B**orders: Uneven, ragged, scalloped.
- **C**olor: Multiple colors, various shades of color, dark streak under a toenail.
- **D**iameter: Approximately a quarter inch or more.
- **E**volving: Changes in size, shape, or color.

To lower your risk of foot or ankle skin cancer, cover up or apply sunscreen to sun-exposed skin, do home checks (grab a mirror or ask for help), and contact our practice if you have any concerns.



Thyroid Disorders and Your Feet

Most foot problems are rooted in issues with biomechanics, improper footwear, lifestyle, environmental factors, wear and tear, and aging. Sometimes, however, a systemic disorder can disrupt foot health — look no further than diabetes.

The thyroid gland impacts nearly every cell and organ of the body. If it's not functioning correctly, the feet can face consequences.

Friction and footwear are common causes of cracked heels; environmental factors such as harsh soaps, hot showers, and low humidity can dry out skin too. However, reduced oil production due to an underactive thyroid can contribute as well.

Frequent foot cramps can be attributed to dehydration, electrolyte imbalances, overuse, fatigue, and prolonged sitting or standing. But a thyroid issue can reduce heart rate and blood flow, depriving muscles of needed oxygen.

In colder weather, the body seeks to keep its core warm, so it may pull back on blood flow to the extremities, resulting in cold feet. Raynaud's disease — small arteries in the toes overreacting to cold — can be a source of chilled feet too. However, if your feet are consistently cold, including during warm weather, the thyroid might be involved.

If you frequently fall prey to fungal toenail infections and athlete's foot, a dysfunctional thyroid might be culpable, as it can weaken the immune system and degrade skin integrity.

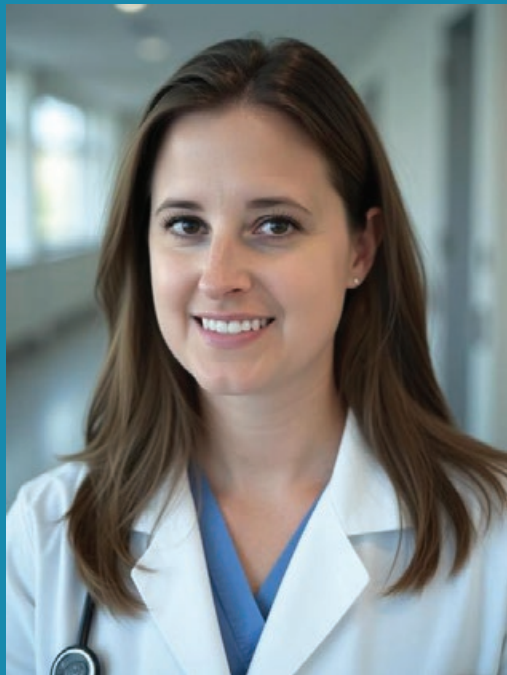
Thyroid conditions can also have a hand in swelling, nail changes, excessive foot sweating, and joint pain and stiffness. A good FYI is that when systemic diseases affect feet, both are typically affected, not just one.

Don't ignore persistent foot discomfort. Instead, schedule an appointment with our practice. If thyroid disease is involved, we will help you successfully manage its impact on your feet.

Mark Your Calendars

- July 4** Independence Day: There are current businesses older than our nation itself — family-run inns, publishers, service providers, etc.
- July 9** Dimples Day: Most people consider dimples charming; more women have them than men; and a golf ball has 300–500, depending on the brand.
- July 11 & 12** Wimbledon finals: Ladies on the 11th; gentlemen on the 12th.
Scones with clotted cream and jam, anyone?
- July 14** Cow Appreciation Day: Cows have a range of vision of 300°, almost 360° when they lower their heads while grazing!
- July 20** Ice Cream Soda Day: Originally, sweet cream and soda was the drink. A Philadelphia vendor allegedly ran out of sweet cream. He substituted vanilla ice cream. Voilà!
- July 28** Milk Chocolate Day: In the U.S., more than two-thirds of milk consumed at schools is flavored (chocolate or strawberry).

Welcome, Dr. Gina Zigerelli



Gina Zigerelli, DPM, is a podiatrist specializing in comprehensive foot and ankle care, with a focus on both medical and surgical management. She earned her Doctor of Podiatric Medicine degree from Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine, graduating at the top of her class. She completed her surgical residency at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), where she received extensive training in complex foot and ankle conditions.

Dr. Zigerelli has a particular interest in diabetic limb salvage, wound management, sports medicine, and forefoot and rearfoot reconstructive surgery. She is committed to providing patient-centered care with an emphasis on clear communication, compassion, and individualized treatment plans.

Outside of work, Dr. Zigerelli and her husband recently welcomed twin daughters and are enjoying life as new parents



Lime-Garlic Chicken Kebabs

Serves: 6; prep time: 20 min.; cook time: 10 min.; total time: 30 min.

The perfect dish for your Fourth of July BBQ or any kind of entertaining!

Ingredients

- 1½ lbs. chicken thighs or breasts, boneless and skinless
- 4 Tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 2 Tbsp. cloves garlic, chopped
- 4 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1½ tsp. sea salt and ½ tsp. freshly ground pepper
- 1 tsp. cumin seeds, toasted and ground
- 1 Tbsp. Greek honey
- ½ cup cilantro, chopped (optional)
- Skewers, metal or wood (if wood, be sure to soak in water for 1 hour)

Directions

1. Trim the chicken and pat it dry. Cut into 1½" cubes or cut it into strips.
2. Prepare the marinade by placing all the ingredients in a big bowl. Mix to combine.
3. To the bowl, add the chicken pieces and coat each one. Cover and refrigerate for two to three hours.
4. Thread the chicken onto the skewers. (If you have cut the chicken into strips instead of cubes, gently fold each strip over itself to form a 1½" cube).
5. Preheat the grill and oil the grates well. Grill the chicken for about 3–4 minutes per side. Using an instant-read thermometer, check the temperature to ensure that the chicken is cooked to 165°F. When ready, place the grilled chicken on a serving platter, cover loosely with foil, and let it rest for 5 minutes.

Recipe courtesy of marilenaskitchen.com.



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Make Feet Summer-Ready
With a 'Medi-Pedi'

See page one.

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Pool Decks and Beaches vs. Feet



Beach and pool destinations are popular haunts over the summer. Amidst the fun, keep your feet and ankles in tip-top shape.

For instance, pool decks can get slippery. Ankle sprains, stubbed toes, and foot trauma can befall anyone in an instant. Nonslip water shoes and waterproof sandals with good grip are your allies when sauntering about the pool.

If you go barefoot, frequent transitioning between wet and dry surfaces can lead to blisters and abrasions. Again, proper footwear can help. Swim fins that are too tight can result in friction-related injuries too.

Be mindful when taking barefoot walks along the shore. Broken seashells, ocean debris, and trash left behind by other beachgoers can cause abrasions, lacerations, and puncture wounds. Sudden drop-offs or holes dug in the sand can do a number on ankles. Decreased visibility during moonlit beach walks elevates the risk.

Athlete's foot fungus relishes warm, moist environments — like those found around pools and in changing areas. Plantar warts are caused by the human papillomavirus and can be contracted through contact with contaminated surfaces. Avoid going barefoot in higher-risk areas when possible, and keep your feet clean and dry, including between the toes.

Prolonged water exposure can ignite fungal toenail infections. Change out of wet footwear as soon as possible and thoroughly dry your feet. Maintain clean and properly trimmed toenails too.

If foot cramps strike while you're in deep water, it can be uncomfortable at best and panic-inducing and debilitating at worst. Stay hydrated, stretch before a swim, and don't swim too long.

If you experience lingering foot or ankle discomfort after a beach or pool visit, allow our practice to make a splash in your recovery.