



Annapolis
Foot & Ankle
Center

News and Updates

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Be of Good Cheer

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.

It might be the most wonderful time of the year, but not always for feet and ankles.

For instance, a white Christmas may be picturesque, but ice and snow can lead to nasty spills. Ice accelerates a fall, and the sudden, violent twists to feet and ankles can result in severe trauma.

Some people are vulnerable to chilblains, which are annoying, painful, itchy patches of discolored skin caused by exposure to cold or damp air that typically form on the toes or fingers.

For those with jobs requiring them to be on their feet all day, and possibly working holiday overtime, feet and ankles may be tired, achy, and swollen by day's end. Long hours of shopping, attending holiday gatherings in ill-fitting shoes, and air travel can do the same. To combat this, soak feet in warm water, gently stretch your feet and ankles (e.g., rotating the ankles, pointing and flexing the toes), elevate your legs, stay properly hydrated, and rest.

Make sure comfy shoes with good arch support and cushioning and which are made of breathable materials (e.g., leather, canvas) fit into the holiday picture. High heels should only be a once-in-a-while thing for just a few hours; don't make a habit of it.

Some holiday foods ramp up gout attacks. Those afflicted should avoid or limit their intake of red meat, organ meat, most seafood, alcohol, and sweet treats. The body produces uric acid to break down the purines found in these foods, but sometimes it accumulates in foot and ankle joints (especially the big toe), crystallizes, and feels like jabbing daggers — a miserable experience.

If your feet or ankles aren't in the holiday spirit, schedule an appointment with our office to change their mood.



Ulcers Attack Lower Legs and Ankles, Too

Venous ulcers are open sores that typically develop on the lower legs and ankles as a result of poor circulation. Faulty valves in these areas allow blood to collect. The result is swelling, which places severe pressure on the skin, sometimes leading to a breakdown — an ulcer.

Early indicators of an impending ulcer include an area of thin, itchy skin. Then discoloration usually sets in: red-ened or purplish patches frequently accompanied by mild swelling and hardened skin. The stage is set for a sore to appear and possibly persistent leg pain. If infection sets in, there may be pus and a foul odor.

Left untreated, a venous ulcer can spur blood clots, tissue death, and limb amputation. Infection can also travel to other areas of the body — an urgent matter.

Those most vulnerable to venous ulcers include older adults, obese persons, those who are sedentary, people who have diabetes, smokers, and those with a history of deep vein thrombosis or previous leg injuries. The double whammy with venous ulcers is that poor circulation causes them, and then they're slow to heal because proper circulation is a key component of healing.

Treatment for a venous ulcer depends on individual circumstances. Compression therapy, wound-care management, debridement (removing dead tissue), skin grafts, surgery (including laser surgery), and amputation are possibilities. Antibiotics may be necessary in cases involving infection.

Preventing a venous ulcer beats getting one treated. Maintain a healthy weight, exercise daily, quit smoking, and elevate your legs regularly.

If you notice any changes in your feet, ankles, or lower legs, contact our office. The sooner you address a potential problem, the better your outcome.

Mark Your Calendars

- Dec. 1** Christmas Lights Day: Thomas Edison created the first Christmas light display. (Of course he did.)
- Dec. 7** Pearl Harbor Day of Remembrance: At the last minute, FDR changed "a day that will live on in world history" to "a day that will live in infamy."
- Dec. 14** Hanukkah begins (sundown): Many Hanukkah foods are fried in oil — an ode to the miracle oil that burned for eight nights.
- Dec. 21** Winter solstice: The sun is closer to the Earth during the Northern Hemisphere's winter than its summer.
- Dec. 25** Christmas: (**WARNING:** Bad joke upcoming.) A camping enthusiast was gifted a new tent for Christmas. What did he say upon first using it? "I'm living in the present."
- Dec. 31** New Year's Eve: In some countries, wearing red undies on New Year's Eve is thought to bring good luck.

A Seasonal Delight ... or Not

Eggnog's origins are believed to be rooted in medieval Britain, where it was known as "posset," a beverage composed of hot milk or cream, spices, sugar, and wine or ale. In the 13th century, monks added a few wrinkles by incorporating figs and the now-traditional whipped eggs.

Originally, posset was a hot drink consumed primarily by the wealthy. Eggs weren't readily available to commoners, and some of the alcoholic components were caught up in economic/political tussles, ratcheting up prices.

Posset landed in North America in the mid-18th century. Eggs were not scarce, and Caribbean rum was inexpensive and plentiful, making the drink accessible to all. In North America, posset was known as "egg-n-grog." "Grog" was the term for an "alcoholic drink diluted with water," or in egg-n-grog's case, milk or heavy cream. As linguistic history attests, two words combined will morph over time, thus "eggnog."

In purest form, eggnog is a decadent drink, but its high levels of added sugar and saturated fat (and calories!) can be mitigated by substituting skim milk or unsweetened almond milk; stevia or monk fruit can step in for sugar. Even a small amount of alcohol is considered detrimental to one's health, but rest assured that eggnog without it is still eggnog. Eggnog possesses some dietary benefits: protein (egg), potassium, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, iron, and a wide range of vitamins. Homemade eggnog can also eliminate artificial flavors and coloring.

Eggnog's link to Christmas originated in colonial times. Winters are cold; eggnog is warm and comforting. It's also fit for special, celebratory occasions, of which Christmas is one!



Healthy Eggnog Recipe (Alcohol-Free)

Eggnog is a tasty, comforting holiday treat, with or without alcohol. And it's dietarily versatile. Enjoy!

Ingredients

- 2 cups nut milk of choice (cashew or coconut recommended)
- 2 large, pastured egg yolks
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 tsp. freshly ground nutmeg (optional)
- 1 date or 1 tbsp. honey for sweetness (optional)
- cinnamon stick for simmering (optional)

Directions

1. Place nut milk, egg yolks, honey, vanilla extract, and nutmeg into a blender; cover.
2. Blend until smooth and creamy (approximately 30–60 seconds).
3. Heat eggnog mixture (and optional cinnamon stick) in a medium saucepan over medium-low heat.
4. Cook, stirring frequently for 5–7 minutes. Do not let the mixture boil! Your mixture may be frothy at first but should thicken as it heats.
5. Strain eggnog through a fine mesh strainer or cheesecloth and serve.

As for other variations ...

- *Low-carb eggnog:* Use cream instead of milk (it's low in the sugar lactose) and a zero-calorie sweetener like monk fruit, stevia, or erythritol, which brings the carb count way down.
- *Paleo eggnog:* Swap cow's milk for sugar-free coconut milk (since dairy isn't permitted on the paleo diet). And sweeten with maple syrup or honey instead of refined sugar.
- *Keto eggnog:* Follow the same trick as making a low-carb eggnog, but skip the alcohol. Alcohol is metabolized similarly to a carb, so it will likely take you out of ketosis.

Recipe courtesy of Erica Zellner: ericazellnernutrition.com.



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For Better or Warts

Plantar warts take root on the sole of the foot (occasionally the top) and are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), which penetrates the top layer of skin. All it needs is a microscopic opening.

HPV is contagious through direct skin-to-skin contact; sharing items such as shoes, socks, and towels; and contact with infected surfaces. Young children, teens, and those with compromised immune systems are most susceptible to plantar warts, but no one is exempt. They present as hard bumps with a fleshy appearance, typically on the ball of the foot or heel, and are often grayish or brownish with a rough surface, a well-defined border, and dark specks within the wart, which are tiny, clotted blood vessels — handsome little devils.

During winter, many people shift from outdoor workouts to the gym, so the risk of plantar warts increases. HPV thrives in warm, moist areas, making public showers, locker rooms, and swimming pools welcoming environments. Wear sandals or other footwear while walking in or near these areas, and maintain a dry, clean bathroom floor at home.

Plantar warts frequently go away on their own, but it might take many months. Over-the-counter treatments are often ineffective and can do more harm than good. For some people, plantar warts aren't painful. But if one (or a cluster) is painful, bleeds, changes appearance, alters your walking, recurs (many do), or is simply embarrassing, give our office a call. **If you have a compromised immune system (e.g., diabetes), contact us as soon as you discover the wart.**

Treatments include topical and/or oral medication, topical acid, liquid nitrogen (freezing), laser treatment, or minor surgery to excise the wart.

