

Blister Prevention.

One of the worst things that can happen on a D of E expedition is an outbreak of the dreaded blisters. We hope after reading this guide you will be able to avoid this often-debilitating occurrence.

WARNING! Do not read if you are eating, about to eat or have just eaten!



In this blog we will be looking at the most effective preventative methods, the reasons for blisters and also some reflexology tips – after all ‘your feet are your temple!’

What is a blister: A **blister** is a small pocket of fluid within the upper layers of the skin. Blisters can be filled with blood (known as blood blisters) or with pus (if they become infected). However, most blisters are filled with a clear fluid called serum or plasma. Serum is the part of the blood that remains after red blood cells and clotting agents have been removed.

A blister usually forms because the outer layer of the skin has become damaged. Fluid collects under the damaged layer of skin, cushioning the tissue underneath, protecting it from further damage and allowing it to heal.

How to prevent them: The most common places for blisters to develop while hiking or backpacking are on the ball of your foot or on your heel. So, how do blisters form and what are the best ways to prevent them? Eliminate as many contributing factors as possible!

1. Make sure that your shoes fits properly. A shoe that is too tight causes pressure sores; one that is too loose leads to friction blisters! Most ‘good’ outdoor stores will have the correct boot fitting equipment, as well as the accessories to ensure the fit is perfect for your foot!
2. Break in your boots gradually before a big trip. Walk around the house; use them for walking the dog!
3. Try to use a liner sock under your thermal socks, so for example a liner would be perfect under an endurance trekker from Bridgedale. A liner sock will allow friction to occur between the socks rather than the foot and the boot.
4. Avoid prolonged wetness. Wet/dampness breaks down the skin, predisposing it to blisters. Dry your feet regularly and be sure to proof your boots every year – Grangers have a good range of footwear proofer!
5. Use a moleskin pad where blisters are common to an area, or a blister has recently healed. The moleskin will protect the skin from any further irritation or friction leading to blisters.

How can I treat my blisters:

Small Blisters can be easily treated. Do not puncture or drain a small blister if it is still intact. Place a piece of donut shaped moleskin over the blister, making sure it is thick enough to keep the shoe from rubbing against the blister. This may require several layers and need securing with tape!

Large or Ruptured Blisters need a little more precision and care. If the bubble is intact, puncture it with a clean needle or safety pin and massage out the fluid. [The juices contain inflammatory juices that can delay healing]. Trim away any loose skin with scissors. Now, clean the area with an antiseptic wipe or soap and water, this will prevent any infection. Next, apply some antibiotic ointment, or Aloe Vera gel and cover with a nonadherent dressing or gauze pad type product. Finally apply a large piece of mole foam, with a hole cut out slightly larger than the blister, around the site. Secure everything with tape and change daily!

Why you should care for your feet Your feet do such a lot of work every day, so you need to keep them clean and looked after. Amazingly, during the average lifetime, our feet take us the equivalent of four times around the world! That much stress and strain can take its toll on our feet, and looking after them is one of the most important aspects of personal health care. We should never ignore problems with our feet - they are unlikely to get better by themselves, and persistent problems can have a disastrous effect on older peoples' independence and mobility.

One million years ago, humans began walking upright. This freed their hands for other tasks, and civilization was born. Initially, simple sandals were designed to protect the feet from cold and injury. Gradually, shoes became a fashion statement that was more important than the feet they were designed to protect. The result is that almost everyone, male and female, experiences a foot problem at some point in their life. Unfortunately, these problems are often neglected until they are very painful or complicated. Get to know your feet, and learn to take care of them. You will be relying on them to take you where you want to go for the rest of your life!

