



Skin Cancer: Feet Aren't Immune

About the Doctor

Terence D. Bredeweg, DPM



A West Michigan native, Dr. Terence Bredeweg was born and raised in the Grand Rapids area. He earned his bachelor's degree in cell and molecular biology from Grand Valley State University, then moved to the Chicago area to earn his doctor of podiatric medicine from the William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine at Rosalind Franklin University.

Dr. Bredeweg returned to Michigan for his podiatric surgical residency at Henry Ford Wyandotte Hospital. He then moved back to the west side to join Kalamazoo Podiatry, and later became a partner in the practice in January 2015. He became lead podiatrist in January 2016, after Dr. Redmond's retirement from full-time practice.

Dr. Bredeweg believes that spending time with patients, educating them about their condition and treatment options, and helping them feel empowered to make decisions about their health care are key to providing the best outcomes.

In his free time, you might find Dr. Bredeweg reading a book or watching the game. He also enjoys outdoor activities, including golf, fishing, and skiing.

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).

Scuba Diving Ascension

A flight to a tropical destination. Scuba diving. A perfect combo for some. But the overlap of diving and (return) air travel can have consequences, as most divers have been instructed.

One concern is decompression sickness (“the bends”) — injuries caused by a rapid decrease in water pressure or air pressure in your surrounding environment. While scuba diving with compressed air, the body takes in extra oxygen and nitrogen. The body uses the oxygen but not the nitrogen, which dissolves in the bloodstream.

When you ascend to the surface, the surrounding water pressure decreases. If you ascend too quickly, the nitrogen doesn’t have time to clear from the blood. Instead, it forms bubbles in blood or tissues, causing symptoms such as dizziness, headache, brain fog, fatigue, weakness, tingling, or joint pain.

Now, perhaps your scuba diving went splendidly. However, if you fly too soon following a dive, any residual nitrogen in your bloodstream can bubble up just as it would in a too-quick diving ascent, since the surrounding air pressure decreases with elevation.

Commercial jets have cabins pressurized to the equivalent of 8,000 feet of altitude, significantly less than at sea level. Small personal or chartered planes often fly above 8,000 feet, and many aren’t pressurized at all.

In addition to air travel, altitude and air pressure also come into play when driving or hiking to higher elevations. Many vacation spots offer sea-level activities and also attractions in nearby higher-altitude areas — think Hawaii.

Bottom line: Your body needs time to decompress. Two major diver organizations, DAN and PADI, recommend 12+ hours between a single dive and takeoff; 18+ hours for multiple dives during your stay. Another organization, NAUI, recommends 24 hours for both scenarios.



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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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.