Dear Alice,

I read your posting on athlete's foot, but have a prevention question: should I be wearing sandals in the shower at the gym? I've always thought of people who do as uptight, American-style germaphobes, folks who shower three times a day, put toilet paper over the toilet seat, and only hold onto subway railings when they're wearing gloves, but I also don't want to have itchy feet. What's the risk, and how good are sandals at reducing it?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Since the fungi that cause athlete's foot can thrive in moist environments, including gym showers, it's not a bad idea to slip on the sandals rather than go barefoot. Besides public showers, flip-flop your feet when walking around other public places such as locker rooms, areas surrounding swimming pools, and spas, too.

Sandals can provide a protective barrier between your feet and potentially infectious surfaces, decreasing the likelihood for getting athlete's foot and other skin diseases. Regular disinfection of the floors of these public places is an added measure that can be useful in limiting athlete's foot transmission. And of course, making sure your feet and the areas between your toes are clean, dry, and/or well ventilated always helps. For more information, read the related Q&As listed below.

Although sandals might seem like a precaution best suited to germaphobes, they're a prevention measure that could help keep your feet comfortable and itch-free.

Here's to healthy and comfortable feet,

Alice!

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