

Media Release
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Survey results indicate Kiwis like their feet but experience significant foot pain

New Zealand's largest podiatry providers, Foot Mechanics recently conducted their inaugural *Foot Mechanics Annual Foot Health Survey 2008*. Results indicate the majority of kiwis stand on their feet for long periods, seek help from a podiatrist when their feet get sore, and actually like their feet.

John Miller, general manager of Foot Mechanics says the survey returned a variety of responses, especially around the number of people who have experienced foot pain.

"We found that 48% of those surveyed said they'd experienced foot pain. Of those people, 27% had suffered medium to extreme foot pain which affected their ability to exercise or work and 25% suffered from pain to such a degree it affected their ability to enjoy life.

The main aim of the survey was to capture an overall picture of people's awareness of personal foot health and the role of a podiatrist. The survey incorporated questions about how people are affected by foot and leg pain, how many people had visited a podiatrist, as well as gaining feedback on what they thought of their feet.

John Miller, general manager of Foot Mechanics says the survey returned a variety of responses, with some interesting perceptions including one person who thought a podiatrist specialised in caring for people's buttocks.

"One person thought podiatrists were, 'bum or bottom,' specialists – an unlikely kick up the pants for podiatry!' says Miller.

When asked what they thought a podiatrist did, 67% of respondents said they were a foot doctor, while 23% said they didn't have a clue what a podiatrist is.

"What we have here is a number of people accessing health care when they have leg or foot trouble, but at least 23% of people had no idea of the options available to them. What most people fail to understand also, is that podiatrists are more than foot doctors but are specialists from the hip downward.

Podiatry deals with the full range of biomechanical movement from the hips down or feet up including lower back pain. The impact of sore feet is not limited to just feet.

Those people surveyed that had visited a podiatrist had done so because of problems with ingrown toe nails and nail care, foot pain, running problems, calluses, diabetes, problems associated with having a low or flat arch, and specialist foot wear requirements.

Further results indicate New Zealanders are a hard working lot, with most people on their feet for eight to 10 hours per day. In fact, an astounding 95% of respondents admitted standing for these long periods.

According to Miller people in retail and laboring jobs are forced to stand upright on their feet all day. He says they see leg and foot problems noticeably in these industries.

“When you have to contend with a grumpy retail assistant, legal executive or plumber, think a moment before judging their attitude. It might be they’re in discomfort from being on their feet all day, wearing inappropriate shoes or their hips, knees, ankles or feet are incorrectly positioned. That can all impact their lower back quite significantly.”

Miller says the impact of bad foot positioning, standing all day or kneeling and lifting heavy objects could have serious detrimental long term effects.

Perhaps most surprising was that the majority of respondents actually like their feet, contrary to the popular perceptions in kiwi culture that feet are ugly.

“It’s good that people enjoy their feet – for function and for looks. People need to know that poor foot posture can speed up the wear and tear on knees, and the curvature in their back is related to the position of their feet. So, to enjoy feet for longer, considering the type of shoes worn will go a long way to ensure getting the best out of feet, for as long as possible,” says Miller.

The majority of respondents were aged 20 to 60 years old. People identified their culture as European (41%) or Maori (33%) with fewer numbers identified as Pacific (17%) or Asian (5%), Indian (3%) and Russian (1%).

About Foot Mechanics

Foot Mechanics has clinics in Auckland, Papakura, Tauranga, Mt Maunganui, Whakatane, Rotorua, Hamilton, Taupo, Manawatu, and Wairarapa regions. They are experienced providers for some of New Zealand’s top sport teams including the All Blacks, Black Sticks, Silver Ferns, Black Caps, NZ Rugby Seven’s Team, NZ Rugby super 14 Teams, Rugby NPC Teams, Netball NPC Teams, and NZ Academy of Sports. Please visit www.footmechanics.com for further information.

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