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How to Keep Your Feet Happy on the Trail

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If you're thinking about your feet while backpacking, you've done something wrong.

When all you have is a couple days out in the wild before you have to head back to work on Monday, every minute you have on the trail is a precious one. You want your boots to help you hike farther, not hinder your adventure. Before your next trip, do some sole-searching: Are your feet happy? Follow these tips to make sure they are.

Take the time for a perfect fit.

If you're not thinking about how your boots feel, they're doing their job. Take the time to have a professional discuss your options with you and fit you properly. Every foot is different, so what works for your friend might not be ideal for you. If you have longer toes, for example, the natural flex point in your foot might not match up perfectly with the point in which some shoes are intended to bend. Consider lace lines, flexibility, and how your feet fill out the boots differently when sitting, standing, and walking. Take more than just a 10-yard pace around the shoe section to try them out.

Support your arches.

Consider adding more cushion to your soles by finding footbeds, or inserts, that cradle your usual pain points. Many boots have removable inserts that you can easily replace with a more custom fit. Make sure to wear socks that complement your boots rather than compete with your feet for space. Try compression socks for some added arch support.

Break in your boots.

If you have a burly pair of boots, wear them around your house or office for a few days to start softening them before you hit the trail. Take walks around your neighborhood and wear them to the grocery store and on whatever other errands you need to run. Avoid attempting a single-day break-in period at all costs—one long hike will never be a replacement for patience, and your feet will likely pay for trying.

Lace 'em up right.

Take note of how your feet feel against your boots. If you feel any squeezing, pressure points, or gaps, loosen and tighten your laces until you find comfort. Try re-lacing them entirely with a different method if loosening your laces doesn't work. Window lacing relieves pressure on the top of your foot, for example, and skipping the set of hooks closest to your toes gives you a roomier toe box.

Keep your feet dry, and let them breathe.

Finding a reliable pair of hiking boots that will keep your feet dry and breathable while backpacking in warm weather conditions is the best way to avoid getting painful blisters. Carrying the GUARANTEED TO KEEP YOU DRY® promise, boots made with GORE-TEX® SURROUND® Product Technology are a great choice. These boots are the first all-around breathable and durably waterproof hiking boots with 360-degree climate control for your feet, keeping your feet dry and comfortable while on the trails. Check out products with the GORE-TEX® SURROUND® Product Technology here: www.gore-tex.com/surround.