

Get reacquainted with your hiking boots! - Random thoughts about boots and blisters.

It's that time of year again; the time to put aside your lightweight trail running shoes, and begin thinking of breaking out the waterproof hiking boots. Even though you were accustomed to the feel and fit of your boots last winter, it may be a whole new ballgame this coming season.

There is likely a weight difference between your warm weather footwear and your winter boots, which causes leg and foot muscles to work a little more (or less)... think Shin Splints. Because of the way the boot operates, you may experience an alteration in gait. The joints from your big toes, to your ankles, knees, hips, and low back may articulate slightly different... think pain and stiffness. Your boots will fit differently than your summer gear... think blisters and bruised toenails.

Break your new seasonal gear in slowly. Wear moisture wicking socks, even in cold weather. Protect your skin by applying moleskin to the inside of your boot.

Random thoughts about blisters: Blisters are nature's way of protecting the underlying tissue which has been damaged from moisture and friction. The basic rule of thumb is to leave the blister alone!! Do not pop the blister or remove the skin covering it. Do not use heat. Do not use ice. If you are diabetic, immunosuppressed or have circulatory problems (peripheral vascular disease), immediately consult your doctor or podiatrist if a blister develops.

If you are hell bent on popping it anyway, consider the following technique: Wash your hands and the blister with soap and water. Swab the blister with iodine. Sterilize a clean sharp needle by wiping it down with rubbing alcohol. Puncture the blister at the edge and allow it to drain. Do not remove the skin overlying the blister. Apply an ointment and cover with a nonstick band-aid. Change the dressing daily. Notify your doctor if symptoms of infection develop (increased redness, increased pain, increased heat, increased swelling, or icky drainage). Avoid hiking again for several days until the area has healed.

Prevention is key!! Now, get out there and have a fun safe time on the trail!!

By Karen Pressman