

Looking After Your Feet

Management of Blisters - Early and Critical

A common sight while hiking is hikers dealing with blisters. Hopefully, you will not get any if you prepare well and train in your shoes and socks for several months to ensure they are worn in and fit properly.

Even people who do not normally get blisters may suffer from foot problems while on the trek and you should know how to deal with them.

Your guide can provide some advice, but it is better that you know what works best for you and fix it.

Friction Blisters

A friction blister is usually caused by irritation from continuous rubbing or pressure, typically on your feet where your footwear rubs such as on the back of your ankle, toes, and sides of your foot.

One warning sign that a blister is about to develop is redness and warmth on the skin called a "hot spot." Next, fluid fills the space between the top two layers of skin to provide protection from continuous rubbing. When this happens you will see a blister that looks like a little bubble on the skin.

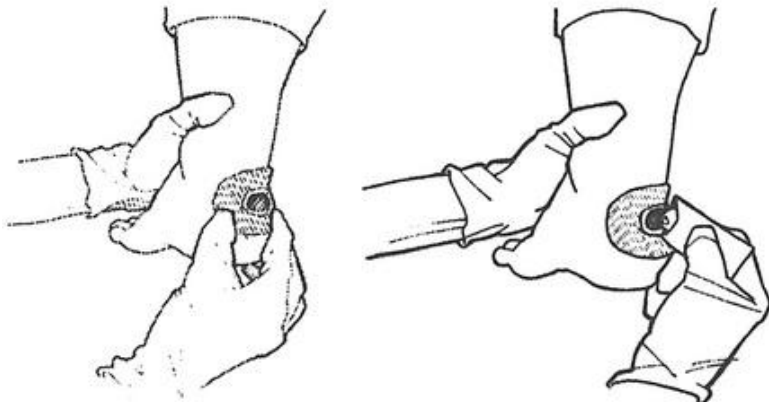
If you have any "hot spots" during trekking, it's important to treat them right away to prevent the blister from developing. Try to keep your feet dry or change socks if possible and allow your feet to dry whenever possible.

Another treatment option is to apply a 2nd skin dressing and tape the sensitive area with Fixomull or similar.

BSN Medical Fixomull Stretch Self-Adhesive Gauze 10x10cm



Typical heel blister which is painful



Applying a dressing to a blister on the heel.

How to Prevent Blisters Using Taping

There is no single right way to tape your feet - only the right way for you. If you're not happy with your taping techniques, give these a go and see if they offer you anything above your current technique. These videos are thanks to Rebecca Rushton from Blister Prevention.

[Video: Blister Taping for your toes](#)

[Video: Blister taping for the balls of your foot](#)

[Video: Blister taping for heels](#)

How to Treat a Blister

If you do get a blister, the goal is to keep the blister from getting bigger and avoid infection. Signs of infection include pus draining from the blister, very red or warm skin around the blister, and red streaks leading away from the blister).

Small unbroken blisters that don't cause discomfort can be left alone to heal because the best protection against infection is a blister's own skin. However, large, painful blisters can be drained as long as you keep the top layer of skin intact and covering the blister.



Ouch, a painful toe blister left without first aid.



Lots of blisters with dressing

How to pop a blister

Wash your hands using the anti-septic hand-wash, and put on your protective latex type gloves from your first aid kit.

To safely drain a blister, first clean the blister and the surrounding area with rubbing alcohol or antibiotic soap and water. Next, sterilize a needle and puncture a very small

hole at the edge of the blister and drain the fluid by applying gentle pressure. Once drained, place antibiotic ointment on the blister and cover it with a bandage and let it heal naturally.

Prevention of blisters can be achieved by applying hydrocolloid pad dressings (eg Dr. Scholl, Spenco) to pressure areas. These often come off in extreme moisture and require an Elastoplast dressing over the top to remain in place. The common pressure areas are the side of the big toe and the ball of the foot, but obviously, this varies and individuals should become familiar with their particular pressure areas during training.

If a blister has excessive amounts of pus draining from it, starts to smell, or becomes red, the blister is probably infected and will need further attention. Antibiotics may be required if the blisters become infected with bacteria. Ask your expedition guide for advice.

[Video: How to treat blisters.](#)



Blisters make trekking NOT fun!