

Blister Prevention and Treatment

Preventing and treating blisters on Expedition

Blisters may be small, but they can pack a punch and will make hiking difficult and painful.

Learn how to prevent blisters, how to treat and some foot care tips to keep your tootsies happy when hiking.

Prevent Blisters

Pressure, heat and moisture are the leading culprits that cause blisters on your feet while hiking. By minimising these, you'll be able to keep your feet blister-free and feeling good.

Proper shoes Proper fit

Too tight will create pressure, too loose and your feet slip and slide - both will cause blisters. Use the Goldilocks approach – wear shoes that fit just right and have a good grip. Insoles can help if your feet are between sizes or need extra support.

Break in footwear

Don't wear brand new shoes. Break shoes in, especially boots. Wear them around before your expedition so they begin to conform to the shape of your feet and be far more comfortable - less pressure or friction.

Keep feet clean

Reduce chafing caused by dirt and debris and reduce the chance of blisters becoming infected. Wipe and rub-off your feet and empty socks of debris at rest stops....and clean them well at the end of the day.

Quality socks

Critical to keep feet dry and cool. Padded wool and synthetic are best. Cotton should be avoided. Sport or hiking specific socks are ideal. Low cut, no show, tab or little ankle socks are unsuitable. Wear a thin liner sock under another pair creating a double-layer if you are susceptible to blisters.

Adjust laces

Take time to adjust your shoe/boot laces for different terrain – looser when hiking to allow feet to swell, but on descents tighten laces at the ankle to prevent toes hitting the fronts of shoes.

Get some air

Remove shoes & socks when resting to air your feet. Damp sweaty feet are softer and more prone to blisters. Use the opportunity to empty debris from your shoes and inspect feet for hot spots.

Treating Blisters

Treating hot spots when you first feel discomfort will save you a lot of time and pain. Sometimes, no matter how good you try with prevention, you still end up with a blister.



✓ Watch any hot spots

Where you feel pressure or tenderness may be a hot spot. Blisters start as a hot spot where the skin's thick outer layers move more than the inner layers, causing separation. Treated early you can prevent a blister forming. Pad with a non-stick dressing and tape to avoid a full-blown blister.



✓ Blister formed

If a blister has formed, check with your Group Leader what is the best course of action - protect and cover, or pop carefully with a sterilised needle then cover. Do not attempt this on your own.



✓ Red and raw

Clean your hands and the blistered area with soap and water or an alcohol/antiseptic wipe. If the skin is red and raw or a blister has popped, use antibiotic ointment on it then cover with a blister bandage or band-aid before applying tape.



✓ Blister dressing

Make your own blister dressing: cut a small "donut" from a non-stick dressing, or your foam mat. Make sure the "donut" fits around, with the blister in the centre hole. Cover the blister with a piece of gauze. Tape or band-aid over this "donut" to hold it in place. Specific toe blister sheaths or blister dressings are available from chemists to carry in your first aid kit.