

## Care Tips and Gift Suggestions for Teachers



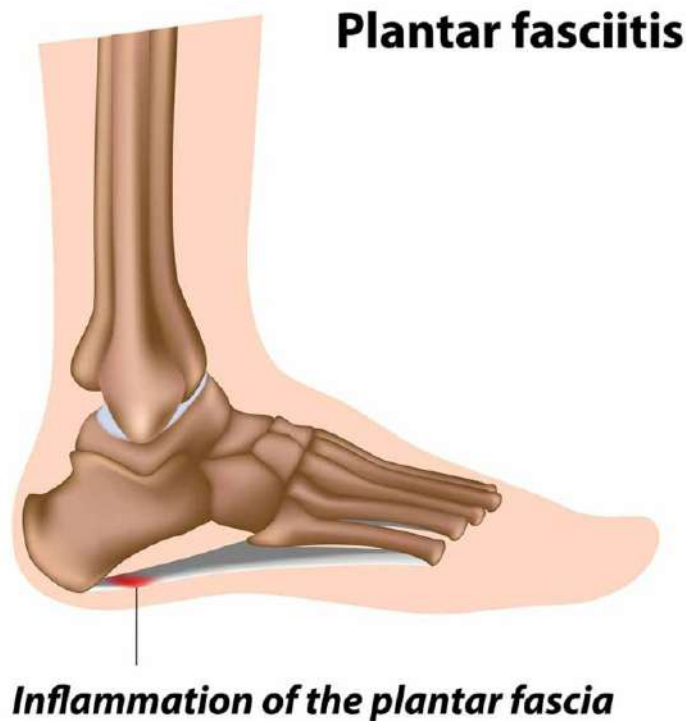
Once a year, teachers are showered with tokens of appreciation from their students. While the gifts can range from homemade cards to boxes of chocolates, teachers in Singapore are often left with a brand-new array of mugs after the first week of September.

Instead of offering your teacher or your child's teacher the standard gifts, we thought we would offer a different perspective on things and perhaps some new suggestions this year. As a practice dealing with lower limb issues, we frequently see teachers among our patients as the nature of their work makes them more susceptible to certain conditions.

1. [Common Lower Limb Conditions](#)
2. [What can teachers do to feel better or prevent such conditions?](#)
3. [What's the right gift?](#)

## Plantar Fasciitis

A common condition in Singapore, [plantar fasciitis](#) is the inflammation or injury of the plantar fascia. This band of connective tissue connects the heel bone to the base of the toes and supports the arch of your foot.



Prolonged standing places increased strain on the plantar fascia, which can become inflamed or injured over time. Plantar fasciitis is characterised by a sharp or stabbing pains in the heel as well as increased pain in the morning that decreases after some time. This condition can be painful to the point of limiting activities such as walking or standing, two duties that are crucial to every teacher's daily tasks.



Treatment for this condition includes [prescribed orthotics](#) that account for and correct the underlying issues responsible for the condition. For chronic (long-term) cases, specialised therapies such as [extracorporeal shockwave](#) offer analgesic (painkilling) abilities while helping to heal the injury.

## Achilles Tendonitis



The Achilles Tendon is the largest tendon in our body and serves to connect our calf muscles to the heel bone. Though sometimes caused by a sports injury, this [condition](#) may also develop amongst teachers due to issues such as overuse, tight muscles, or flat feet.

Achilles Tendonitis is characterised by pain along the tendon and at the back of the heel, as outlined by the yellow section of the image above. Other symptoms can include limited ankle flexibility, redness or swelling, and stiffness in affected areas.



While treatment options like orthotic insoles and shockwave therapy are outwardly similar to those for plantar fasciitis, the application of treatment is different as the two conditions are caused by different factors. In addition, severe cases where the tendon has ruptured, other conservative treatments such as [ankle foot orthotics](#) may be necessary.

### **Posterior Tibial Tendon Dysfunction (PTTD)**

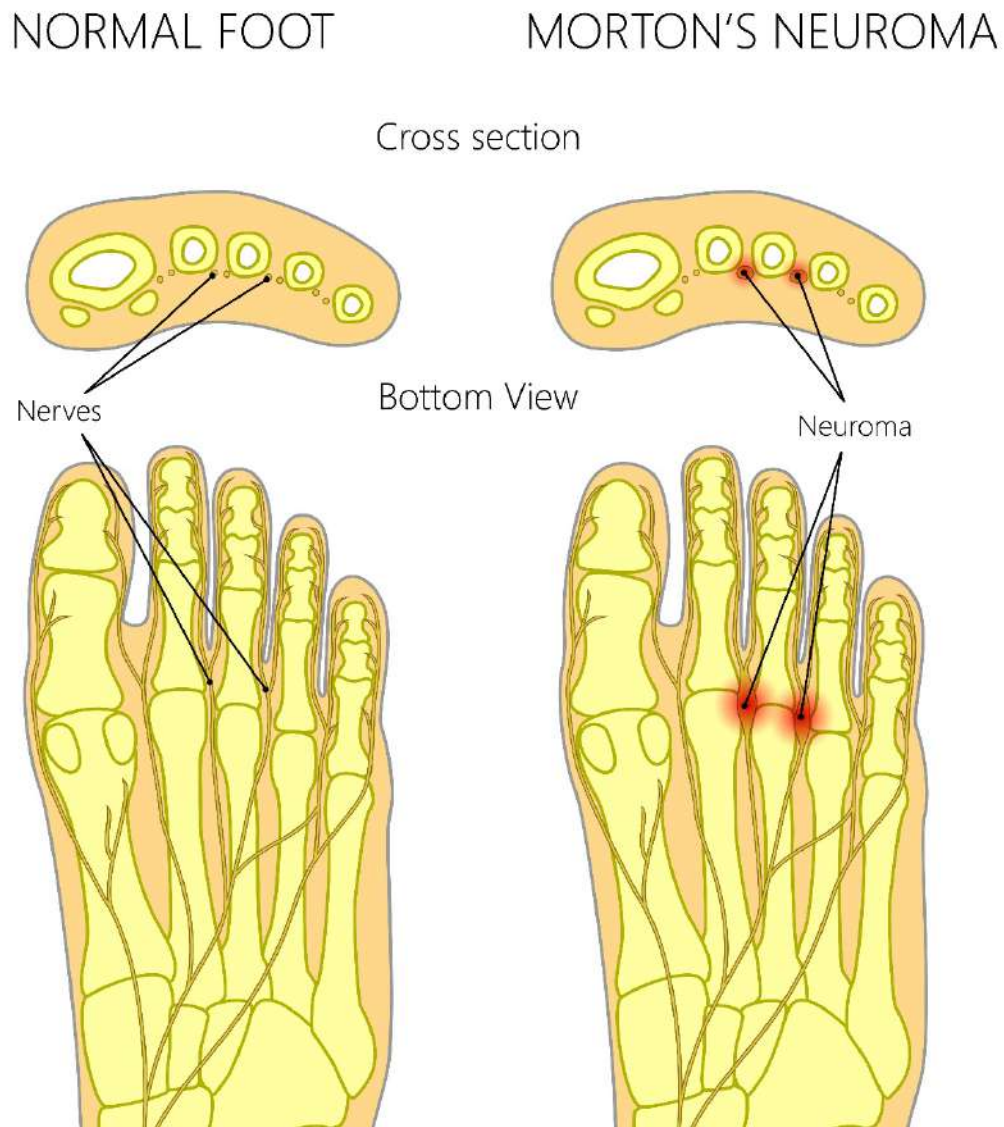
PTTD is the inflammation or injury of the posterior tibial tendon and is often known as adult-acquired flat foot. This tendon connects one of the calf muscles to the navicular bone in the foot and is responsible for holding up the arch of the foot and supporting it while walking. As teachers spend a lot of time on their feet in the classroom, they are susceptible to developing this condition.



Check out the video [here](#).

When PTTD occurs, the tendon is weakened and inflamed, causing pain. This weakens the support provided by the tendon, causing the arch to collapse over time. Symptoms include pain along the inside of the foot and ankle, pain worsening after activity or change in the shape of the foot.

## Morton's Neuroma



This condition is 8 to 10 times more likely to develop in women than men. Morton's Neuroma occurs when the tissues around the nerves that run between the metatarsals thicken, forming small growths. When these growths are irritated or compressed, sufferers may experience the sensation of having a pebble trapped under the foot, burning or stabbing pain, or numbness or tingling may develop.

Some of the causes for this condition include wearing tight, pointy or high-heeled shoes, doing activities that place stress on the feet and having other musculoskeletal issues such as having flat feet, bunions, or high arches.

Treating this condition often requires several approaches. These can include alleviating the stress on the feet through the use of prescribed foot orthotics, utilising specialised treatments such as extracorporeal shockwave therapy, or [pulsed electromagnetic field therapy](#) to soothe and heal the pain.



## **What can teachers do to feel better or prevent such conditions?**

### Tip #1 Choose the Right Shoe

The right shoe makes a huge difference for those who are frequently on their feet. Things to look out for include choosing shoes that are sufficiently wide for their feet, a large toe box, and a firm heel counter which supports the back of the heel to prevent the shoe from slipping. Avoid heels as much as possible. If heels are unavoidable, have a second pair



of shoes available to offer your feet some respite in between lessons. If you are unable to locate a suitable shoe, podiatrist prescribed orthotics offer increased support while addressing the underlying issues responsible for the condition.

**It is important to note that off-the-shelf or even retail ‘custom’ orthotics generated by computer scans don’t provide any corrective features. They are still stock arch supports that are shaped to conform to your already problematic feet.**

### Tip #2 Take a break

Although teachers spend much of their time on their feet, they will have some occasional breaks in between or during lessons. While it might be difficult to try this in the classroom, it is a suitable relaxation technique while in the office. After taking off your shoes, try rolling a tennis ball under your feet. This has multiple effects such as helping your foot muscles relax, stretching your toes and reducing the chances of a ligament injury.

### Tip #3 Seek Professional Help

It is common in Singapore for many to ignore or neglect lower limb pain and injury. This allows for conditions to worsen, making the eventual treatment much more complex and uncomfortable. In extreme cases, patients only seek advice when the condition has deteriorated to the point where surgery is only the option. If you are experiencing discomfort in your lower limbs, see a [podiatrist](#).

## What's the Right Gift?

### Gift Idea #1

Tennis or golf balls can be used for massaging the underside of the foot. Sweeten the gift by providing a list of suitable instructions and exercises that your teacher can do. This gift is both inexpensive and thoughtful and teachers are sure to appreciate it!

### Gift Idea #2

Anti-fatigue floor mats may be less common in Singapore, but this gift can help cushion your teacher's feet and reduce the stress on their legs. As these mats can be pricey, consider petitioning the school leadership to install such mats for teachers in each classroom.

### Gift Idea #3

In this article, we have mentioned the importance of shoes on several occasions. Choosing a suitable shoe for others is immensely difficult, so one possible alternative is to gather a group of classmates to pool your funds to get your teachers a gift vouchers for shoe purchases.

### Gift Idea #4

We have stuffed this article with lots of suitable tips for both teachers and those around them. Click on this [link](#) and print a copy for your teacher or remind them about the self-care tips that they can adopt to help them avoid serious injury!