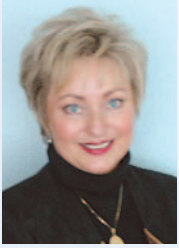


## DON'T ABUSE YOUR FEET!

# HOW DOES TODAY'S LIFESTYLE IMPACT THE HEALTH OF OUR FEET?

BY KATHARIN VON GAVEL DNM; BSc Pod



**Katharin von Gavel**, a featured platform speaker and recognized educator in foot care, has studied Dermatology and Paramedical Esthetics in Europe, and holds degrees in Podology, Chiropody and Pedorthics, and is a Certified Master Pedicurist. As well as teaching advanced foot care for over twenty years across North America, Ms. Von Gavel owned and operated medi-spa clinics for over two decades.

Ms. von Gavel's objective is to improve the professionalism of the foot care industry in the salon and spa sector. Her knowledge and expertise continue to enhance the development of professionals throughout North America.

**"My Mission is to change the quality and safety of pedicures in North America one foot at a time."**

**W**e walk approximately 160,000 kilometers in a lifetime, which is equivalent to almost 4 times the circumference of the world. This should be reason enough to give more awareness to these small appendages at the lowest end of our anatomy. Yet, all too often, we continue this self-abuse of ignoring our feet.

Ninety eight percent of all people are born with healthy feet. And, it is human nature to want to move. As we age however and with today's lifestyles, people seem to be moving less and less. We live a fast-paced, high stressed, super-sized, sedentary life and the first thing we cut out is exercise, or movement in general. With the invention of the PC, the affordable cell phone, the Internet, drive-through restaurants and longer work weeks due to technology, we have had greater lifestyle changes in the past 20 years, than we have had for several hundred years before.

It is these lifestyle changes that are having a major impact on the health of the skin and the nails on our feet, yet foot care is largely neglected. Many of us have no difficulty showing off our bodies in string bikinis, short skirts, scant tops exposing the mid rift, but many still have a problem or are embarrassed to show their feet.

Today's lifestyles, the increased incidence of diabetes and the lack of daily movement, are the primary cause of poor circulation of the lower extremities. With this poor peripheral circulation, the skin of the feet is not getting the proper nourishment that it needs to stay healthy. Unhealthy, or dry skin is no longer just esthetically displeasing, but for a client with a compromised immune system, it may become a health risk.

More precisely, long before the complete lower limb circulation becomes compromised the problem starts with poor venous return blood flow. As the foot and leg muscles work less, the blood vessel walls carrying the return blood flow through the veins become weaker. The valves that should prevent the back flow of the venous blood then don't close properly

anymore (see diagram) and are the cause for the stagnation of metabolic waste. This affects and impairs micro-circulation, resulting in a breakdown of the function of the skin, particularly skin on the bottom of the foot. Remember, the soles of the feet must endure several hundred pounds of pressure on a regular basis and it is imperative that the skin remains healthy in order to perform its protection function.

The impaired micro-circulation of the feet and venous insufficiency together result in the skin becoming dry. Dry skin leads to micro lesions, giving bacteria, fungi and viruses, portals of entry for which to enter the skin.

Although the incidence of skin or nail conditions of the foot exist in about three in every ten adults, we find that the incidence of these conditions is even much higher in salon and spa-going clients! This gives the salon technician a fantastic opportunity to educate their clients, which in turn leads to increased revenues through retail sales.

Let's think about what we tell our clients about sun care before sending them off to their favorite vacation spot. The time has come for the professional technician to make sure we also educate our clients on correct foot care and to offer solutions for their foot conditions. Solutions should be made up of "Pediceuticals" such as Footlogix products that not only eliminate dry skin and fungal infections, but can also offer products that act as a dermal barrier in order to prevent infection. Another recommendation for clients who suffer from any kind of swelling of the foot, ankle, leg or knee, is the use of compression hose, knee highs, three-quarter and full lengths, which are available today in many retail stores as well from professional fitters.

Educating ourselves to identify skin and nail changes will allow us to inform our clients to take these conditions seriously and give recommendations not only to treat the symptoms but also to take a serious look at the possible causes.

An educated technician builds a loyal clientele. ■