



## **Amanda Jane Modaragamage**

Podortho Nurse | Writer

Over the last 10 years, Advanced Nursing Foot Care services throughout Canada have drastically increased partly due to nurses choosing to leave bedside nursing for alternative options like entrepreneurship. With this increase of nurses choosing to start their own business and the booming trend in #worklifebalance, nurses have found a way to keep their career as a nurse, without the burnout of bedside nursing.

Dominating the Foot Care Nursing space, mainly female led entrepreneurs across Canada have found a new way to balance their lives and families all while earning a 6 figure income as Podortho Nurses (Foot and Lower Limb care specialists). Sounds too good to be true? For some more experienced Foot Care Nurses, it apparently is.

With this booming trend of Nurse Entrepreneurship, has come some pretty harsh backlash from veteran foot care nurses. Many foot care nurses have been practicing within a narrow yet comfortable scope of practice for many years and when new Podortho Foot Care Nurses push the boundaries of their learning and scope of practice, by offering more advanced technologies, services and treatments to their clients, there has been, needless to say, foot care nurses pushing back with what they believe to be the limits of Advanced Foot Care Nursing.

One controversial topic of conversation over the past years has been foot soaking before providing Foot Care services. It was believed, in the past, that by providing soaking services to clients, there was a higher potential and increased risk of infection. One website notes that by causing the skin cells to absorb water before foot care treatments, nurses can cause micro-tears in the skin, invisible to the eye, that can become infected or cause permanent damage to the feet. Another website writes that the reason behind not soaking before foot care treatments can be due to the potential to cause burns, hypothermia and even falls.

Although there are many claims against foot soaking before foot care treatments, there is little to no physical or documented evidence to support these claims.

## **Foot Soaking Throughout the World**

Although foot soaking has gained a bad reputation with foot care nurses across North America, cultures across the world have been using foot soaking techniques for generations to treat pain, increase circulation and even treat infections in the feet and lower limbs.

In China, it is customary to soak the feet at night to “wash away the day and promote a healthy sleep” Chinese men and women have been soaking their feet for over 2000 years to promote relaxation and healthy skin. Chinese Medical Master, Sun Si Miao, states that by soaking the feet, one will promote sleep quality, lower blood pressure and improve the skin's overall condition and appearance.

Across Europe, it is common to soak the feet in a mix of dead sea salt, Himalayan salt or Epsom salt to detoxify, soften and exfoliate the skin of the feet. This is known to help alleviate pain and increase circulation to the feet and also helps to treat and cure small infections around ingrown toenails or small wounds in the feet. This process has been documented for hundreds of years without medical evidence that it causes or worsening infections in the feet and lower limbs.

Let's not forget that for generations North Americans have been visiting and using Spas for relaxation, this includes manicures, massages and pedicures. These pedicures are almost always preceded with a foot soak for sometimes up to 10 minutes before the actual foot care is performed. This is a common technique used to promote relaxation before a spa treatment and can soften the skin enough to allow the esthetician to provide nail and skin care with a lighter touch and less force than if the skin was to be dry.

## **Foot Soaking Throughout History**

Where did the claim that foot soaking is bad in the first place even come from? After endless research online, there is actually almost no documented evidence to support the claim that soaking the feet before an Advanced Nursing Foot Care Service can cause infections, burns, hypothermia or any of the claims noted on popular website across North America.

The history of avoiding soaking feet originated during the war when soldiers would show symptoms of what was known then as “trench foot”. Trench foot, also known as immersion syndrome, is when the feet are submerged in wet trenches for days, if not weeks at a time without the ability to change footwear or socks. This caused blisters, blotchy skin, infections and soft tissue breakdown and ultimately could cause severe infections, such as gangrene and even limb loss.

These conditions were severe and nothing like what we see today after a 5–10-minute foot soak so why are we still so scared of foot soaking before Advanced Nursing Foot Care services?

## Reasons to Soak before Advanced Nursing Foot Care

Soaking the feet before a foot care service is not only relaxing, it can even increase the stimulation in the feet for those clients that suffer from Diabetic Neuropathy and help the client identify pain or discomfort during their foot care treatments. According to WebMD, foot soaking has many crucial benefits such as: relieving stress and tension, increasing blood flow to the lower limbs and even can help relieve the pain from gout or other foot health conditions.

### *Decreasing symptoms of fungal skin and nails:*

One research study out of the Ironwood Cancer Research Centre states that by soaking the feet in warm water and salt, it can promote the skin to relax and absorb the magnesium from the salt. This is known to help to rid the skin of infections such as athlete's foot and other fungal infections in the skin and nails.

### *Easing Inflammation:*

Although there are new studies to suggest that soaking in certain mineral treatments may help detoxify the body, this can be controversial however, there are studies to suggest that the absorption of the magnesium through the feet can help to boost the levels of minerals in the body, therefore, promoting ease of inflammation caused by arthritis and gout.

### *Exfoliating and smoothing the skin:*

One common concern that comes up when treating feet is dry, hardened skin, also known as callus skin. Soaking in salt-based water can exfoliate the skin and promote new, healthy skin in its place thus reducing overall callus areas and discomfort.

Podortho nurses are first and foremost, just that; nurses. Throughout their 2-to-4-year College or University program, their main objective is to critically analyze what they read, to come up with evidence-based practices they can rely on to support their practice as a nurse.

Have Foot Care Nurses been avoiding foot soaking so long that they forgot to ask the valuable question: Where did the taboo of foot soaking come from in the first place and why are we still avoiding it today when there is such little evidence to support its claim?

Thanks to new research and evidence-based practices across the world, nurses are now, more than ever, questioning older practices and habits throughout healthcare to ultimately expand their own scope of practice and build upon their skills and knowledge as nurses.

AMANDA JANE

**Resources:**

Health Benefits of a Foot Soak:

<https://www.webmd.com/pain-management/health-benefits-of-a-foot-soak>

Benefits of Epsom Salt Soak:

<https://www.ironwoodcrc.com/benefits-of-epsom-salt-foot-soaks/>

Chinese People and Foot Baths:

<https://wuhealing.com/blog/2020/9/16/why-do-chinese-people-love-foot-bath#:~:text=Foot%20bath%20is%20a%20very,very%20long%20history%20in%20China.>

What is Trench Foot:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/trench-foot>