



Growing Feet and Milestone Checkups

Young children's feet are not simply small adult feet. They are undergoing constant change and development.

For instance, some cartilage is in a holding pattern until ossification occurs — the transformation of cartilage to bone. Growing bones are softer, too, and are more vulnerable to overuse issues and stress fractures. As soft tissues (e.g., muscles, tendons, and ligaments) and bones develop, they frequently do so unevenly — for a period of time, bone growth outpaces soft-tissue growth, rendering some soft tissues tighter and more injury-prone.

Some children are too young to convey exactly where they are feeling discomfort. Others try to ignore pain or don't know any differently (they might feel discomfort is normal). If your child won't (or can't) tell you about foot or ankle pain, be alert to these hints of trouble:

- Your child seems overly clumsy.
- Their shoe tread wears unevenly.
- Their walking pattern seems odd to you.
- Your child asks to be carried more than other kids their own age.
- You notice bumps, lumps, hard skin, or rashes on their feet.
- Your child avoids social functions and/or sports participation. It's not just a matter of physical health for kids when their feet and ankles aren't functioning properly; it can affect them socially and throw roadblocks onto avenues of possibility.

Podiatric checkups are vital for kids. Milestone ages for them include age 1 (roughly), when beginning to walk; age 3, when they start to walk more like an adult — a "heel-to-toe" gait; age 5 or 6, before starting school; and each year after if playing organized sports.

Early intervention is the key to your child's well-being and proper foot and ankle development. If a podiatric exam is overdue, contact our office today.



Plantar Fasciitis Doppelganger

Although plantar fasciitis may be a frequent culprit behind heel pain and discomfort, it sometimes takes a bum rap because of another condition with similar traits: Baxter's nerve entrapment.

The Baxter's nerve runs along the outside, bottom of the heel and transmits vital sensory and motor information involving the heel and smaller muscles of the foot. When it becomes compressed or entrapped, symptoms mimicking plantar fasciitis arise: heel tenderness, sharp or burning pain, tingling, numbness, and foot or ankle weakness. It is estimated that 20% of chronic heel pain cases are attributable to Baxter's nerve entrapment.

Compression/entrapment of the nerve can be caused by repetitive stress, such as running (especially on hard surfaces); wearing shoes that don't fit properly, lack arch support, or have substandard cushioning; obesity; heel spurs; flat feet; or ... plantar fasciitis.

There is one key difference between plantar fasciitis and Baxter's nerve entrapment. Plantar fasciitis is typically worse early in the day, especially upon rolling out of bed, or after sitting for a spell and then getting up. Baxter's nerve entrapment tends to progressively worsen with activity or toward the end of the day.

Symptom similarities between plantar fasciitis and Baxter's nerve entrapment emphasize the need for an accurate diagnosis and effective treatment that only podiatric care can provide.

Conservative treatment options for mild cases range from a change in footwear, orthotics, and customized exercise/stretching plans, to shockwave therapy, massage, and ultrasound therapy, among others. In more difficult cases, ultrasound-guided cortisone injections or surgery might be recommended.

Treatment delays for Baxter's nerve entrapment can cause pain to linger for months, sometimes years. Schedule an appointment with our office to reclaim your quality of life.

Mark Your Calendars

- Mar. 3** National Anthem Day: What's sung before many sporting events is just the first of four verses.
- Mar. 10** Daylight Saving Time Begins: Give thanks for automatic digital clock resets.
- Mar. 17** St. Patrick's Day: Guinness is the most popular beer in Ireland; over 25% of sales.
- Mar. 19** First Day of Spring: Migrating birds appreciate stocked bird feeders. Kind of like a rest stop eatery, only healthier.
- Mar. 26** Make Your Own Holiday Day: e.g., All Hail the Writer of "Mark Your Calendars" Day.
- Mar. 29** Good Friday: Every year, London's Trafalgar Square hosts the open-air play *The Passion of Jesus* for free. Live-stream it online.
- Mar. 31** Easter: In C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*, he presents his "Lord, liar, or lunatic" argument.



Leave It to Beaver

Until the early 1980s, castoreum — a yellow-brown, fatty substance with a musky, vanilla scent and taste — was used to enhance the vanilla and fruit flavorings found in foods such as ice cream, iced tea, yogurt, candy, fruit juices, and some alcoholic drinks.

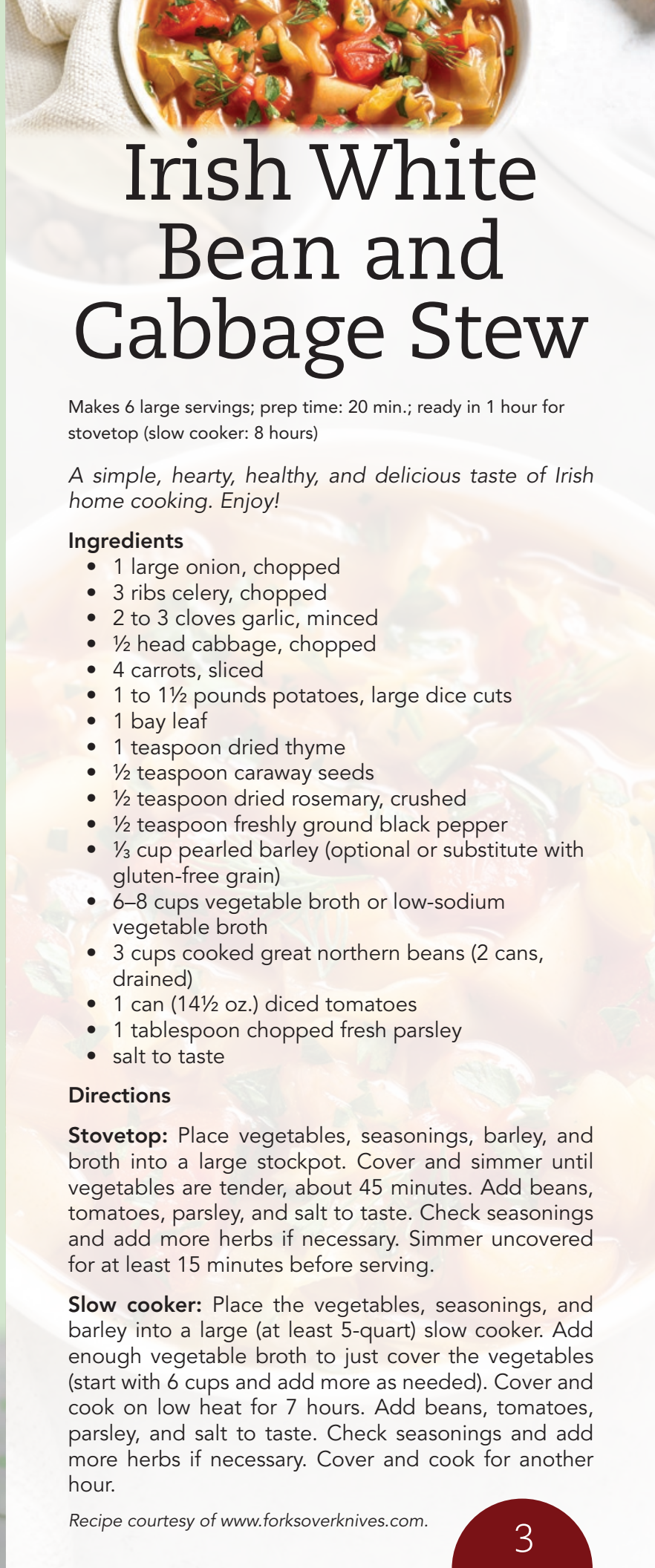
But what many people may not know is that castoreum comes from the castor glands of North American beavers, who use it to mark their territory. What's more, a beaver's castor glands rub shoulders with their anal glands. Yes, beaver butt flavoring has been devoured by millions of Americans.

If you're wondering how something collected from a beaver's nether regions could have an appealing taste or aroma, it's all about diet. Gut bacteria in mammals' waste and secretions typically cause a rank odor. However, the specific bark and leaves that comprise a beaver's menu defy steep odds and cultivate something pleasing to the senses.

The sharp downturn of castoreum usage coincided with the arrival of artificial vanilla flavoring, a byproduct of political strife in Madagascar in 1976, the dominant producer of vanilla. By 1980, the expense to capture, anesthetize, and "milk" beavers, and then release them into the wild, could not compete with the new kid on the block: much cheaper artificial vanilla.

Foods with "natural flavoring" could still possibly host castoreum in minuscule quantities. The FDA permits small amounts of over 3,000 different ingredients and chemical compounds to hide behind that banner, though they are declared "generally recognized as safe."

A New Hampshire distillery makes a bourbon whiskey called Eau de Musc. In its marketing, castoreum is its prime selling point. With every sip, somewhere a beaver lifts its tail in salute.



Irish White Bean and Cabbage Stew

Makes 6 large servings; prep time: 20 min.; ready in 1 hour for stovetop (slow cooker: 8 hours)

A simple, hearty, healthy, and delicious taste of Irish home cooking. Enjoy!

Ingredients

- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 ribs celery, chopped
- 2 to 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ head cabbage, chopped
- 4 carrots, sliced
- 1 to 1½ pounds potatoes, large dice cuts
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon caraway seeds
- ½ teaspoon dried rosemary, crushed
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ⅓ cup pearly barley (optional or substitute with gluten-free grain)
- 6–8 cups vegetable broth or low-sodium vegetable broth
- 3 cups cooked great northern beans (2 cans, drained)
- 1 can (14½ oz.) diced tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- salt to taste

Directions

Stovetop: Place vegetables, seasonings, barley, and broth into a large stockpot. Cover and simmer until vegetables are tender, about 45 minutes. Add beans, tomatoes, parsley, and salt to taste. Check seasonings and add more herbs if necessary. Simmer uncovered for at least 15 minutes before serving.

Slow cooker: Place the vegetables, seasonings, and barley into a large (at least 5-quart) slow cooker. Add enough vegetable broth to just cover the vegetables (start with 6 cups and add more as needed). Cover and cook on low heat for 7 hours. Add beans, tomatoes, parsley, and salt to taste. Check seasonings and add more herbs if necessary. Cover and cook for another hour.

Recipe courtesy of www.forksoverknives.com.

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Eat Healthy, for Feet's Sake!

March is National Nutrition Month, the perfect time to consider what foods can improve our overall health ... including our feet and ankles!

Vitamin C is a key component in keeping the 33 joints in each foot/ankle combo healthy: 1) it helps the body produce and maintain collagen, a protein structure that is the building block for muscles, ligaments, tendons, and bones; 2), it assists in wound healing; and 3) studies have shown it lowers the risk of gout by reducing uric acid levels. (Good sources: citrus fruits, strawberries, broccoli, cantaloupe, kiwi, tomatoes, bell peppers)

Calcium and vitamin D are essential for good bone health. Calcium strengthens bones, while vitamin D facilitates the bones' absorption of calcium. Dairy products and dark, leafy green veggies are rich calcium sources. The best supplier of vitamin D is sunshine — 15 minutes per day without sunscreen. Salmon, sardines, cod liver oil, tuna, and "vitamin D-fortified" foods are beneficial. If you're thinking supplements, talk to your primary care physician first.

Dark, leafy green veggies are also good sources of B vitamins, which can help ward off peripheral neuropathy for those with diabetes. The riboflavin in spinach is a healing agent that can help prevent diabetic foot ulcers from becoming infected.

Foods high in antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids can diminish inflammation flare-ups of plantar fasciitis and arthritis. Good sources include fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts/legumes, beans, fatty fish, and whole grains. Whole grains can also reduce the risk of diabetes by helping to control blood sugar levels.

Avoid cracked heels by staying properly hydrated. Good skin care is also abetted by pomegranates, walnuts, and a little bit of dark chocolate now and then.

