

Nothing spoils a great hike like a hotspot (preblister) or a blister on your foot. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure . Benjamin Franklin may not have had blisters in mind when he coined this phrase, but it certainly is true.

The key to keeping your feet happy is preventing blisters before they form.

What Causes Blisters?

Every hiker has had a blister at some point in their life. Blisters are by far the most common injury hikers have. Most blisters are caused by poor-fitting shoes/socks, lack of conditioning, and not properly caring for your feet.

- **Heat:** Excessive **friction** is normally caused by shoes that don't fit properly. Your feet starts rubbing against the sides of your socks and it will quickly cause hot spots.
- **Grit :** Spend enough time on the trail and you'll eventually get grit in your shoes. Throughout the day, remove sand, dirt and gravel from the insides of your boots. Those little pieces of debris will cause serious hotspots over a long hike.
- **Moisture:** Moisture causes two main problems. Wet socks cause more friction, reduces the cushioning and increases the movement in your shoes. Moisture also softens up the skin

Blister Stages

There are 5 basic stages of blister progression. Each stage of blister needs to be treated differently.

- **No Blister:** Your foot feels perfectly normal. This is where you need to start using preventative measures Try using hikegoo to areas where you normally get blisters.
- **Hot-Spot:** You can feel slight pain from your foot rubbing inside your shoe. It feels physically hot to the touch, but you don't have a complete blister. Take your shoes off for a bit and apply both hikegoo and moleskin to the area to prevent further damage.
- **Roof Intact:** A small blister starts to form, but the roof is fully intact. At this point your best bet is to rest, air out your feet Apply moleskin or a Hydrocolloid Blister Bandaid to the damaged area.
- **Torn Roof:** If the roof if your blister is torn off you need to take surgical scissors and cutoff the excess skin. Cutting off the skin stops the blister from spreading. Use Neosporin and moleskin/hydrocolloid bandaid
- **Deroofed:** At this stage you're probably in serious pain. The blister is rubbed raw and likely hard to the touch. You need to take a serious break and air out your feet. After that apply antiseptic/Neosporin and moleskin/Hydrocolloid bandaid.

Blister Prevention

Wear properly fitted shoe

Wear thick hiking socks

Air out your feet to dry them off

Stop to remove dirt and debris

Take regular rest breaks.

Use Hike Goo and apply moleskin or Hydrocolloid Band-aids when necessary

Take care of your feet BEFORE the hike.

- **Calluses and Corns**

Thick calluses and corns will crack on a long hike creating a serious problem. Use skin cream to prevent your feet from cracking. You need the callus to build up, but you don't want it to become excessive.

- **Trim Your Nails**

Keep your toenails trimmed and pay special attention to ingrown nails. Ingrown nails and sharp edges can really irritate your skin.