

RUNNERS' WORLD

July 2005

Lab Rat

PUTTING METHODS AND REMEDIES TO THE TEST

Solutions for Stinky Feet and Shoes

YOU MAY NOT THINK you have a foot-odor problem, but your spouse, your running buddies, and the guy five treadmills down may disagree. It comes with the territory of being a runner. "The more your feet sweat, the more your shoes retain moisture," says Richard Braver, D.P.M., a sports podiatrist at the Active Foot and Ankle Care Center in Englewood, New Jersey. "And odor-causing fungus likes to grow in those moist environments." To test how to best get rid of the big stink, we created some. After running in wet socks, we sealed up our shoes in a plastic bag, and let them ripen overnight. Then we went in an army of products to battle it out. —Amy Rushlow



PRODUCTS	HOW	PROS	CONS
 Dr. Scholl's Odor Destroyers Shoe Shot \$7.29	Moisture-absorbing powder	Curved bottle makes it easy to get in shoe; mild, soapy scent; lasted a week	Messy. It's easy to shoot too much out of the bottle.
 On Your Toes Foot Powder \$14.95	Bactericide powder for shoes and feet	Eliminates bacteria; can be used directly on feet; shoe application lasts six months	Pricy; unscented, so it doesn't cover up odor
 Arm & Hammer Baking Soda 48¢	Absorbs foot moisture to prevent fungus growth	Inexpensive; available at grocery stores	Wears off quickly; need to use daily; cardboard box spout isn't user-friendly
 Penguin Fresh Twist Shoe Deodorizers \$4.99	Place in your shoes to neutralize odor	Powerful yet not overpowering; can use in a gym bag; deodorizers last two months	Have to remove ball every time you wear the shoe; doesn't destroy bacteria
 Sof Sole Odor Control Peppermint Mist \$4.99	Breaks down the odor-causing bacteria and masks smell	Destroys bacteria; pleasant peppermint scent is effective for mild to moderate odor	Mist is too gentle to cover strong odors
 Airplus Gel Sport Plus \$9.99	Charcoal-infused insole absorbs moisture	No mess; scent is mild and not too strong	Changes the feel and fit of your shoe; not for orthotics-wearers
 Penguin Sneaker & Shoe Deodorizer \$4.99	Odor-masking spray	Powerful enough to wipe out serious stench	Almost as overpowering as foot odor; doesn't fight bacteria

BEST BET The ideal solution is to stop foot odor before it starts. **FOR YOUR SHOES:** Rotate two pairs so that each pair has ample time to dry out, Braver says. If you run in the rain or through a puddle, stuff newspaper in your shoes overnight to help them dry. **FOR YOUR FEET:** After showering, soak your feet in warm water and a few tablespoons of Epsom salt, a drying agent. If you can't shower after a run, wash your feet and change your socks. Avoid cotton socks, which absorb moisture. "Running in cotton is like running on a wet sponge," Braver says. It's doubtful your feet will ever get as stinky as the Active Foot and Ankle Care Center's test shoes, but the findings are a good reminder to keep your shoes and feet as clean as possible.

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