

# Dying Without Shoes: An Epidemic We Can Eliminate



SAMARITAN'S FEET



**D**isease can attack and kill in many different ways. Maladies can be transmitted through the air we breathe or by the people and items we touch. The microscopic cells, viruses and bacteria are unseen and indiscriminate of person. Epidemics are wide spread cases of disease. They are alarming and have led to the pursuit of vaccines, and the production of the most basic of hygienic items such as tissues, hand sanitizers, masks, and air hand dryers.

Many epidemics *can* be slowed or prevented by vaccine, education, improved hygiene, and research. Some epidemic diseases like polio have been practically eradicated in the Western world by an effective vaccine. Other epidemic diseases such as cholera have been controlled with improved hygienic and educational solutions. However, deadly epidemics still exist. The spread of AIDS and the Swine Flu have attracted much media attention while cases of infection continue to increase. These killers have become the focus of governments, and the target of billions of donated dollars. Yet, they still spread in a veil of unsolvable hopelessness. At the same time, there are other widespread epidemics killing millions of our children and the world is sadly unaware. Epidemics that can be eliminated with even the most simple of products and education. No research is needed. No inventions are required. We already have what we need to solve the problem and save the lives of millions. The solution is SHOES! We can save the lives of millions with new shoes, proper medicine and hygiene education.

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## Dying Without Shoes: An epidemic we can eliminate

Almost half of the world's population lives on an income of less than \$2.50 per day. This fact indicates the inability of 3 billion people to afford the basic necessities of life including food, housing and clothing. Many may never have the opportunity to own even one pair of shoes.

A lack of adequate footwear is more than a simple inconvenience or lack of comfort. Millions are infected or dying each year due to the spread of diseases contracted through unprotected feet.

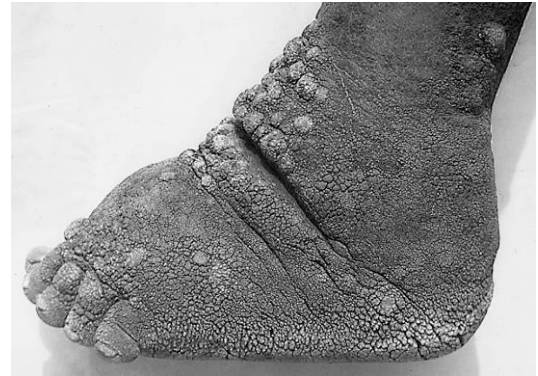
It is estimated that two billion people worldwide are currently plagued with parasitic diseases that could be prevented by wearing proper footwear. Shoes are

There are many diseases contracted and spread due to bare feet and the inability of the poor to obtain shoes. The most prevalent among them are soil-transmitted helminthiasis (STH). These are a group of parasitic infections of the intestine caused by nematode worms. STH is the most prevalent of neglected tropical diseases and is responsible for significant morbidity and, indirectly, mortality in poor developing countries.

Currently, there are only four drugs used to treat STH, and concerns are growing that they are becoming less effective and that resistance to the drugs could increase. A better solution is needed. The spread of STH can also be slowed with shoes. Where drugs can be expensive to research and develop, shoes can be

## Why shoes?

The staff and volunteers involved with Samaritan's Feet understand that shoes are a solution that can be applied now at minimal cost. Drugs are very important when it comes to treating diseases, but shoes can be used to prevent the hardship and life-threatening symptoms caused by parasitic infection and soil transmitted helminths. By washing feet and providing shoes, Samaritan's Feet is both sharing hope and saving lives.



**Podoconiosis** is considered one of the world's most neglected tropical diseases. It is a type of endemic non-filarial elephantiasis prevalent in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, Cameroon, Tanzania, and Guinea, particularly in barefoot agricultural workers. It is the result of walking in silica-heavy volcanic soil. Tiny particles of silica penetrate the skin of barefoot farmers. These particles enter the lymphatic vessels. The body reacts as if a wound is present and makes a fibrous plug that clogs the lymphatics, causing elephantiasis.

**Hookworm** is an intestinal parasite that is caused by direct contact with soil contaminated with larvae, or by ingestion of the larvae. This epidemic is often furthered by the prevalent use of contaminated feces and other biomasses as fertilizer and fuel for cooking food. It infects 1 billion people worldwide and is found in Europe, Africa, Asia, and South America. The larvae typically penetrate the skin of the legs or feet and travel in the venous system to the heart, and then to the lungs where they enter the airways. Next, they are coughed up into the throat and then swallowed. In the intestine, the larvae develop into worms that attach to the bowel wall and suck blood. Excretion of the eggs into the soil completes the life cycle. Hookworm causes anemia, abdominal pain, diarrhea, and weight loss. It can also cause growth retardation.

**Schistosomiasis** is a disease caused by parasitic worms. It is not found in the United States, but affects 200 million people worldwide. Its highest prevalence and severity is in school-aged children. Infection occurs when skin comes in contact with contaminated water in which certain types of snails that carry schistosomes are living. The parasite leaves the snail and enters the water where it can penetrate the skin of persons who are wading, swimming, or washing. Worms grow inside the blood vessels of the body and produce eggs. The body reacts to the eggs with fever, chills, cough and muscle aches. Excretion of the eggs through urine and feces complete the life cycle of the worm. Repeated infections can damage the liver, intestines, lung and bladder.

**Tungiasis** is a disease caused by a parasitic flea. It is found in tropical Africa and is highly prevalent in impoverished areas. About 42% of Nigerian children are infected with tungiasis. This disease affects the feet primarily. Fleas burrow into the skin of the host on the bare foot or toes. Painful swelling and the development of a fibrous cyst follows. It may progress to bacteremia, gangrene, tetanus and death. The major risk factor for developing tungiasis is failure to wear shoes when walking in sand infested with fleas.

## An Epidemic: The Primary Diseases

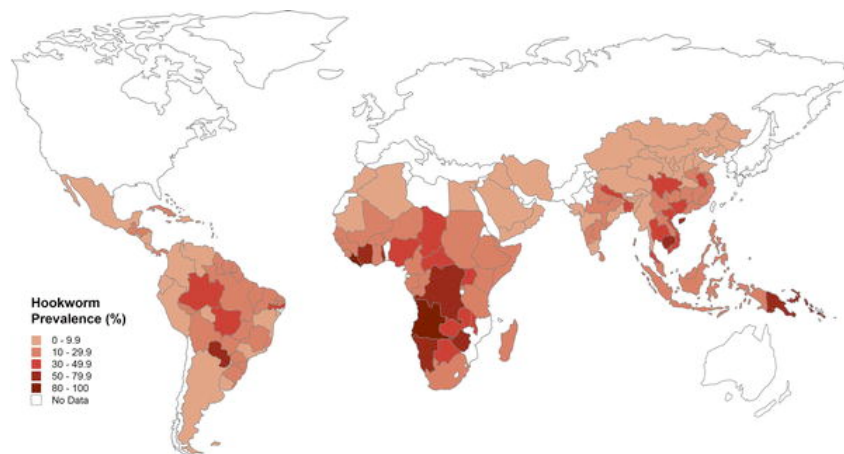
## A Vicious Cycle

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that there are many hazards associated with going barefoot in contaminated sand, soil and dirty water. In many developing countries where stagnant water is a problem, these diseases are almost a condition of life. Parasites breed in such water, with females releasing 3,000 to 200,000 eggs per day depending on their type. Children sometimes swim in parasite-infested waters, and in the absence of suitable drinking water, people may be forced to drink it and use it for cooking purposes. Amongst the poorest of the poor, parasitic infection is a vicious cycle.

Once parasites enter the body, they often perforate the intestines, circulatory system, lungs, liver and other organs, and cause physical trauma. They can lump together in balls, and travel into and erode or block the brain, heart and lungs. On occasion, these lumps have been mistaken for cancerous tumors. Parasites also give off metabolic waste products that poison the body. Left untreated, the infections they cause can result in the loss of limbs, chronic illness and even death.

Parasitic infections often prevent adults from being able to work and children from being able to attend school. The relationships between illness, access to education, and poverty have been well-documented by organizations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

## The World's Problem



There are many different types of parasitic and soil transmitted diseases prevalent in the world. Hookworm, podoconiosis, and schistosomiasis, are just a few of the most common. According to the World Health Organization there are currently 2 billion people infected with these diseases in more than 100 countries. This is truly a worldwide epidemic that demands immediate attention and action.

### There is Hope

The people of Samaritan's Feet believe that shoes are so much more than status symbols and fashion accessories. A new pair of shoes can be a symbol of hope and the source of life to a person in need. The Samaritan's Feet Shoes of Hope distributions are designed to both meet physical needs and inspire young people to believe in the value of life and service. These distributions are the outpouring of the Samaritan's Feet dedication to changing hearts and lives forever.



### Washing Feet

Samaritan's Feet is more than a charity. Our commitment to a lasting hope that can change the world forever demands that we do more than simply pass out shoes like free candy. We take the time to wash the feet of those who receive our shoes, and work with our distribution partners to ensure that they do the same. It is important to provide basic hygiene and hygienic education in order to provide a legitimate and lasting means of overcoming the deadly parasitic and soil-transmitted epidemics terrorizing the developing countries of our world.



### A Targeted Approach

South America and Sub-Saharan Africa are two of the hardest hit regions of the world by poverty and debilitating diseases that can be prevented by wearing shoes. Samaritan's Feet has established regional offices in Nigeria, South Africa, Brazil, and Peru, so that we can serve effectively on the front lines in our battle against this epidemic. We have sent trained volunteers and containers of shoes to help tens of thousands of children and impoverished adults in Burundi, Cameroon, the Sudan, and other countries hit hardest by these diseases. More than 1,000,000 pairs of shoes have been distributed by Samaritan's Feet in the last 5 years. More than one million lives have been changed for the better. More than one million souls have been offered a true message of healing and hope.



## 10 on 10 in 10

The thought of helping almost two billion people in one effort is overwhelming. However, to think about one child, ten students, one hundred prisoners, and one thousand young pregnant women, makes the impossible seem possible. The opportunity of placing shoes on the feet of the needy and defeating this deadly epidemic comes into focus when you consider the power of partnership, the reach of multiplication, the simplicity of lacing up one pair of shoes, and the ability of modern transportation to take us anywhere in the world.

**Each day millions face the dangers of laceration, fungus, contaminated soil and insect bites that lead to infection, disease, amputation, and death. It is the goal of Samaritan's Feet to lead the fight against this epidemic and place 10 million pairs of shoes on 10 million of these hurting and endangered people in the next 10 years.**

**People are dying without shoes. Epidemics have been alleviated in the past by the hard work and sacrifice of passionate people willing to address the needs of others, offer material and financial resources, provide basic education, and share the encouragement necessary to help others find the hope they need to fight for their lives.**

**The solution is SHOES. Shoes are needed to prevent, protect and propel. Join Samaritan's Feet today in the effort to eliminate this epidemic and change the world forever.**

For more information contact:

Samaritan's Feet International  
www.samaritansfeet.org  
info@samaritansfeet.org  
866-833-SHOE (7463)

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