

## Blisters

### What causes blisters?

Blisters are caused by friction between shoes or boots and the skin. Repeated rubbing causes the outer layer of skin to separate from the inner layers and the space between fills with fluid (See Figure 1). They are a common problem for football players' wearing-in new shoes and boots, as well as for football players who take part in long training sessions. Blisters are particularly common during pre-season games and training, when the ground tends to be harder.



Figure 1 – Blisters.



### Blisters can be prevented!

### What can the player do to prevent a blister?

There are a number of things a player can do to prevent blisters:

- Ensure that shoes fit correctly.
- Reduce the potential for a blister by applying a 'second skin' or strapping tape.
- When the player is wearing boots ensure that all the seams are flat inside the shoe.
- The player should take care of their boots, do not leave them on or near heaters. This may cause the leather to shrink and the seams to protrude.
- Wherever possible, the player should change their socks regularly and use foot powder to help keep them dry.
- The player's feet should be kept as dry as possible. Wet shoes, boots and socks will cause blisters faster than dry feet and boots.



Figure 4: Second Skin



Dri Fit Socks – useful in the prevention of blisters



Football Boots

### What can the player do if they start to develop some 'signs' of a blister?

The first sign of a blister will be redness of the skin, possibly at the back of the heel, the instep or toes. These areas of the foot are commonly affected while taking part in training or playing football. A short-term measure to use, while the player is training or playing is to cover the foot and the affected area in Vaseline (petroleum jelly). This will provide some relief from pain and prevent the blister from worsening. However, this should only be used as a short-term measure – during a game for example (See Figure 3).

The player could also apply a second skin dressing and tape the affected area (See Figure 4). This is a highly effective method of blister management. During longer training sessions and tournaments, the player should ensure their feet are dry and should change their socks regularly.



Figure 3: Vaseline

### How can a player treat a blister?

A player should seek the help of a podiatrist if their blister is serious or preventing them from playing or training. A podiatrist is someone who specializes in treating feet. They will be able to help treat and manage the blister while the player is returning to training.

If the blister has not burst then it may be necessary to make a small hole at the edge with a sterilized pin or needle, particularly if the blister is on a weight-bearing surface (the instep, back of heel or toes). This allows the fluid to drain. Drain the fluid but leave as much of the skin as possible covering the wound. This is an important protective layer for the underlying skin and will help to prevent infection.

The player can then clean their blister with a sterilizing wipe. Cover the 'blister wound' with a second skin. If the player is training or playing apply strapping tape over the top of the second skin, to prevent it from coming loose.

If the player is in any doubt about their blister management see a podiatrist, and never drain a blood blister – always seek advice from a podiatrist.



Podiatrist