



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES
CN 360
TRENTON, N.J. 08625-0360

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN
Governor

LEN FISHMAN
Commissioner

November 20, 1997

Dear Mr. Tetlak:

I received your request for information concerning going barefoot in public places. There are no specific state regulations that address this issue. Additionally, there is little evidence available to suggest that this practice poses a major public health hazard.

There are situations in which the risks of infection associated with this practice can be increased. The first that comes to mind is the potential of injury. A puncture wound would raise concerns of possible transmission of tetanus. Clostridium tetani can be found in human and animal feces, and the spores can survive in dry soil for years. Most of the reported cases are secondary to acute wounds.

There are no established studies that confirm the risk of fungal and viral transmission via intact skin. The thickest layer of skin is located on the feet and this generally provides an adequate barrier to most pathogens.

The risks associated with walking barefoot in public places are greatest to oneself. The particular risk will vary according to the susceptibility of the individual. However, it will be greater in environments that support high levels of pathogens such as locker rooms and public showers that are not cleaned on a regular basis. Additionally, a break in the skin will provide a portal of entry that will complete the chain of infection.

If you have specific concerns regarding this issue, please feel free to contact Anthony T. Monaco, Coordinator Health Projects III, Public Health Sanitation and Safety Program, at (609) 588-3124.

Sincerely,

Len Fishman
Commissioner