

The 3-Day Crack-Free Reset

A short, working evening routine for hardened heel skin — using things almost certainly already in your bathroom. Read time: four minutes. Protocol time: three minutes a night.

Edited by the Crack-Free System team · Reviewed by editorial team · v1.0

Read this first. If you have diabetes, peripheral neuropathy, an open wound on your foot, or any current foot infection, **do not** use this routine without first checking with a podiatrist or GP. Cracks that look minor can be serious in those cases. This guide is general self-care information and is not medical advice.

DAY 1 THE EVENING SOAK

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A bowl or basin large enough for both feet
- Warm water — body temperature, not hot
- Two tablespoons of baking soda *or* Epsom salt
- A soft towel
- A plain, urea-based foot cream (10–20% urea) or unscented petroleum jelly
- A pair of cotton socks

The protocol

1. Fill the basin with water that feels just warm to your wrist. Not hot. **Hot water actively dehydrates your skin** — this is the most common mistake.
2. Stir in two tablespoons of baking soda (or Epsom salt — either works; baking soda is slightly better for thick callus).
3. Soak both feet for ten minutes. Read, scroll, watch something. Don't scrub.
4. Pat dry with the towel — do not rub. The skin is at its most fragile right after a soak.
5. Within sixty seconds of patting dry, apply a generous layer of urea cream or petroleum jelly to your heels and any callused areas. Generous means *visible* — not rubbed all the way in.
6. Put cotton socks on immediately. Get into bed.

WHY THIS WORKS

Warm water softens keratin (the hard protein in callused skin) and opens the skin's outer layer. Baking soda gently raises the pH and further softens that layer. The 60-second window after patting dry is when your skin is most absorbent. Cream applied during that window reaches the dehydrated *deeper* layer — the layer your daytime moisturizer cannot reach. The socks then keep that moisture in overnight instead of letting it evaporate.

The mistake to avoid: a foot file or pumice stone. Aggressive mechanical removal of callus triggers a protective thickening response. The skin grows back drier and harder. This is why the file-then-cream cycle never ends.

DAY 2 THE 90-SECOND OCCLUSION TRICK

Day 2 is the same as Day 1 with one small addition: the *occlusion step*. This is what professional estheticians do at the end of a salon pedicure — and it is almost universally skipped at home.

The protocol

1. Repeat the warm soak from Day 1 (ten minutes, lukewarm water, baking soda).
2. Pat dry. Apply a *thicker* layer of urea cream or petroleum jelly than yesterday. Twice as much. Don't rub it in.
3. Cover each foot in cling film (plastic wrap) for ninety seconds. Press it gently against the heel. This is the occlusion step.
4. Remove the cling film. Put cotton socks on directly over what remains of the cream. Go to bed.

WHY OCCLUSION MATTERS

The biggest reason creams "don't work" on cracked heels is **transepidermal water loss**: the moisture you applied evaporates within minutes. Cling film creates a temporary, water-proof seal that forces the cream *into* the skin rather than letting it sit on top. Ninety seconds is enough. You do not need to wear it to bed.

DAY 3 THE THREE-MINUTE MAINTENANCE

By Day 3, most readers report visible softening: the yellow rim around the heel looks duller, the deep crack feels less rigid, the surrounding skin looks calmer. From this point forward, you switch to maintenance.

The protocol (three minutes, twice a week)

1. In the shower or bath, let warm water run over your heels for one minute. No soak needed.
2. Step out, pat dry.
3. Apply cream generously to heels. Cotton socks on. Bed.

Tuesday and Friday evenings are an easy pair to remember. You can drop to once a week once the skin has been smooth for a month.

What success looks like

WHEN	WHAT MOST READERS REPORT
Morning after Day 1	Heel skin looks duller (less shiny-hard), feels slightly tackier. The change is subtle but real.
Morning after Day 2	Visible softening. The thick yellow callus rim begins to look lighter. Surrounding skin feels less tight.
End of week 1	Deep cracks feel less rigid; if a crack was bleeding, the spot is usually closed.
End of week 2	Most cracks fully closed. Calloused rim significantly thinner. Sandal-comfortable for most.
End of week 4	If maintained twice weekly: heels stable. No file, no salon, no £25 cream required.

My heel has a crack that bleeds. Should I still soak?

Cover the bleeding spot with a liquid bandage (any pharmacy stocks these) before the first soak. Once it has closed — usually within two days — you can soak normally. If a crack continues to bleed after a week of this routine, please see a podiatrist.

Can I use coconut oil instead of urea cream?

It is better than nothing, but less effective. Urea is a *humectant* — it pulls moisture into the skin. Coconut oil only seals what is already there. If price is the concern, plain petroleum jelly outperforms most expensive specialty creams.

Will I have to do this forever?

Twice a week, three minutes, yes — the maintenance is the whole point. The cracks come back if you stop. The good news is the maintenance is faster than brushing your teeth and far cheaper than a single salon visit.

What products do you actually recommend?

Any urea cream between 10% and 20%, unscented if possible. CCS Foot Care Cream (UK), Eucerin UreaRepair Plus (US/EU), Flexitol Heel Balm (worldwide) all work. None should cost more than £12. We are not affiliated with any of these brands.

What about my toenails / fungal issues?

Out of scope for this guide — suspected nail fungus needs a proper diagnosis. Please see a pharmacist or podiatrist.

If you only do one thing tonight

Skip the soak. Skip the cling film. Just apply a thick layer of petroleum jelly to your heels and put cotton socks on before bed. This single change alone — **cream + socks, every night, for a week** — will deliver the majority of the result. The protocol above is faster, but the simplified version still works.

— *The Crack-Free System team*

One small ask: when you start to see softening, please reply to the welcome email and tell us. We read every reply. The protocol gets a little better every month because of the readers on the list.

This guide is general self-care information and is not medical advice. Statements have not been evaluated by the FDA, MHRA, or any equivalent regulatory body. This material is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. If you have diabetes, peripheral neuropathy, open wounds, or any active infection, please consult a podiatrist or GP before trying any home routine. Brand names mentioned for illustrative purposes only; we have no affiliation. © Crack-Free System.