

Diabetes and your Feet



This leaflet explains:

- Why people with diabetes need to pay careful attention to their feet
- What you can do to reduce the risk of developing a serious problem

Date of Preparation: November 2015, Job code: TRR 123h 1/15



Where to find out more

For more information on Flexitol urea-based emollients to treat dry and cracked skin, please visit www.flexitol.co.uk

Please visit the Independent Diabetes Trust (IDDT) website for more help and information on living with diabetes. IDDT also has a helpline number to support anyone affected by diabetes.

Website: www.iddt.org

Helpline: 01604 622837



Very Important:

If your foot becomes red, hot, swollen or unusually painful, you may have an infection. Make an appointment immediately with the specialist team.

Contact name

Telephone number

Your feet and diabetes

People with diabetes have an increased risk of developing foot problems.

Over time, raised blood glucose levels may cause damage to blood vessels and nerves in the legs and feet.

This can result in loss of sensation (feeling), one of the symptoms of neuropathy.

Loss of sensation means you may not notice an injury or a change in the condition of your feet.



Symptoms of neuropathy can include:

- ◆ Tingling
- ◆ Burning
- ◆ Numbness
- ◆ Pain

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should tell your practice nurse.

Raised blood glucose levels over time can also lead to reduced circulation. This can result in:

- ◆ Slower healing of wounds
- ◆ Pain in your feet and legs
- ◆ Skin and nails can become thin and dry

If left untreated, foot problems can become serious and may result in diabetic foot ulceration or even amputation.

What is your level of risk for developing foot problems?

It's very important that you know your level of risk. There are 4 levels of risk:

Ulcerated Foot/Foot Emergency

If you don't know your level of risk, ask your GP or practice nurse. You should have a diabetic foot screening at least once every year.

High

Moderate

Low



What can you do to reduce the risk of developing problems?

Keep good control of your diabetes

Monitor your blood glucose levels and discuss concerns with your nurse.

Keep in good health

Obesity, smoking, drug and alcohol abuse increase your risk of diabetic foot complications. If you need any help in reducing these risk factors, see your GP or Practice Nurse for support.

Be alert to foot issues

Check your feet daily for any open wounds, redness or swelling.

Routinely look after your feet

Apply a moisturiser to your feet daily to prevent dry skin. For areas that have become dry, hard or cracked, ask your Practice Nurse or GP about using a urea-based emollient.



Footwear matters

Foot deformities such as bunions and hammer toes can make shoe fitting difficult. Ask your podiatrist or health professional for advice on footwear.

Corns and callus can be caused by shoe pressure or the way you walk. See a podiatrist for advice and treatment.

Do you need help to check your feet?

If you are unable to manage your own toe nails or have difficulty checking your feet, can someone you live with help you? Tell your GP or your nurse if you need help to check your feet or cut your nails.

DOs and DON'Ts in footcare



DOs

- ✓ Check feet daily, with a mirror if necessary, and report any concerns immediately to a health professional.
- ✓ Wash and dry feet daily, paying particular attention to between the toes.
- ✓ Test water temperature prior to bathing.
- ✓ Use a moisturiser daily; avoid between the toes. For areas of dry, hard and cracked skin or callus, ask your nurse or doctor about using a urea-based emollient.
- ✓ Check shoes before putting them on to ensure there are no foreign objects in them, eg, stones.
- ✓ Wear shoes that fasten securely and are deep and broad enough for your feet.
- ✓ Call your doctor or nurse immediately if you find a cut or sore that doesn't begin to heal.



DON'Ts

- ✗ Don't walk bare foot even when on holiday or in the house.
- ✗ Don't use acid preparations such as corn cures and hard skin removers.
- ✗ Don't try to remove hard or loose skin yourself.
- ✗ Don't use heat pads or hot water bottles.
- ✗ Don't soak your feet for too long – it will dry them out.
- ✗ Don't cut toe nails too short or down the sides. Instead follow the shape of the toe.
- ✗ Don't delay seeking advice on cuts or sores on your feet.