

Footcare

Check whether your feet are at risk. Talk to your doctor, podiatrist or diabetes nurse.

- > Inspect your feet daily so you pick up damage early.
- > Care for your feet daily so cuts heal normally and don't get infected.
- > Know where to get help if problems occur eg podiatrist, doctor, nurse.

Remember: 'One pair must last a lifetime.'

What problems can occur?

Any person with diabetes, of whatever age, requires daily foot care whether at home, in hospital or in a nursing home.



Circulation problems

People with diabetes, particularly those who smoke, have a high risk of poor circulation to the legs and feet.

Loss of foot sensation

People with diabetes, even young people, may lose sensation due to damaged nerves which leaves feet susceptible to injury.

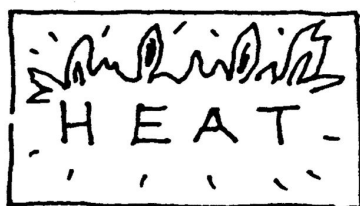
Slow rate of healing

People with diabetes often heal more slowly after foot injury due to poor circulation. This increases the risk of infection.

What to watch

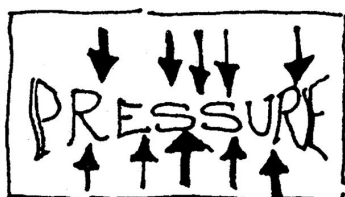
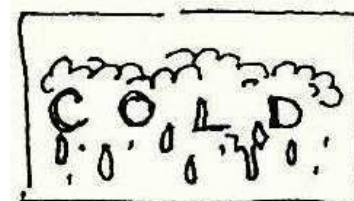
The sensation and circulation of your feet may be reduced.

Beware of!



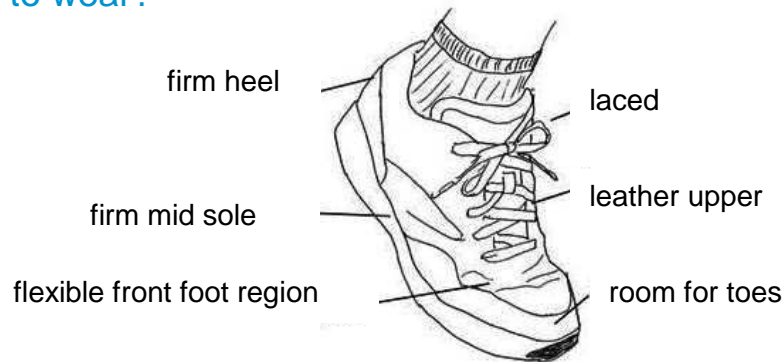
Do not use electric blankets, hot water bottles or heaters. You may burn your skin without realising it.

When your feet get cold, sensation and blood supply can be further reduced. Keep your feet warm in bed socks, Ugg boots etc



Pressure can cause calluses to form and damage to skin. If your shoes are pressing on your feet or you notice areas of redness, you should change your shoes. They may be too tight. Have shoes professionally fitted.

What to wear?



(Based on a drawing which appeared in *Australian Family Physician*)

Footwear should be comfortable and needs to protect your feet. Shoes should be well fitted. You should be able to wiggle your toes and have a finger space at the end of your longest toe when standing up. Your foot should not have any points of pressure.

Check inside your shoes for rough areas or objects every day before putting your shoes on. After all, shoes are supposed to protect your feet not damage them.

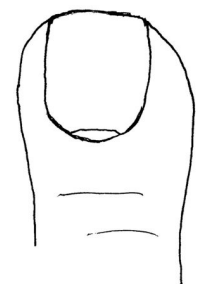
Shoes and socks should 'breathe'. Wear woollen or cotton socks which soak up moisture and still allow the passage of air. Shoes made of leather remain your best choice, as they don't hold in the moisture. To protect your feet shoes should cover all your foot and be strong enough to withstand the occasional knock. If you are at risk it is recommended that you not go barefooted.

What to do?

Look at your feet every day. If there are any signs of infection (redness, swelling, ooze) or broken skin, see your doctor immediately. If there are signs of pressure (corns, callus) discuss them with your doctor, podiatrist or diabetes nurse. You may need to use a mirror if you have difficulty inspecting your feet. Wash your feet daily and gently pat them dry. Dry them thoroughly, especially between the toes.

Apply a moisturising cream at least once a day. An example of a suitable cream is Sorbolene with 10% glycerine.

Trim your toenails using clean clippers. Follow the natural curve of your toe, being sure not to cut too short. Never cut down the sides of the nail. If there are sharp edges, file with a nail file or emery board. Ask your podiatrist to teach you the best nail trimming technique for your toe shape.



Don't treat ingrown toenails, corns and calluses yourself and never use corn cures. You may need referral to a podiatrist.

Try to buy your shoes from a shoe shop that has certified shoe fitters and make sure you let the shoe fitter know that you have diabetes.

The fit of your shoes really is important and can make a huge difference to your long-term foot health.

First aid for minor injuries

If you have a small skin break, you can do the following.

- > Gently wash and dry the foot.
- > Apply Betadine antiseptic.
- > Apply a clean non-stick dressing and secure with tape (not plastic).
- > Protect with additional padding or bandage if needed.
- > Check and re-dress daily until healed.

Consult your doctor if there is any deterioration or delay in healing or there is no improvement in 1-2 days.

Footcare kit for home

- > Providone iodine solution / ointment
- > Cotton buds
- > Moisturising cream eg Sorbolene
- > Nail clippers
- > Dry dressing eg Handypor
- > Nail file
- > Sterile gauze squares
- > Emery board
- > Keep your kit in an airtight container in the bathroom.

The final word

Remember the advice that applies to everyone with diabetes.

- > Stay in control. If your blood glucose levels are well controlled this will minimise any diabetes problems.
- > By keeping your weight within normal limits and being as active as possible you will keep your body, heart and circulation and blood glucose in good shape.
- > Remember smoking reduces blood supply, damages the blood cells that carry oxygen and damages blood vessels.
- > Ask for help. Remember that your local doctor, podiatrist and diabetes nurse educator are all available to give you advice. Ask them about problems early rather than late.
- > Get your shoes fitted by a professional, certified shoe fitter.

For more information

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