

Patient Instructions for Diabetic Foot Care

One area in which complications from diabetes can occur is the feet. Diabetes may cause nerve damage in the feet with resultant loss of feeling. Diabetes may also reduce blood flow to the feet, making it difficult to heal an injury or resist infection. Because of these problems, small blisters or sores from everyday wear and tear may go undetected and quickly progress to serious infection and/or non-healing wound. Most people with diabetes can prevent any serious foot problem by following these simple guidelines.

Wear comfortable shoes that fit well and protect your feet. Wear only closed toe shoes that are properly fitted by a foot or shoe specialist. Most insurance plans cover prescribed custom-made shoes and orthotics (shoe inserts) to help support and protect your feet.

Shake out your shoes and feel the inside before wearing. Your feet may not be able to feel a pebble or other foreign object, always inspect your shoes before putting them on.

Wear clean, dry socks. Change them daily. Avoid socks with tight elastic bands, socks with holes, and socks that are thick and bulky (they can fit poorly and irritate the skin).

Never walk barefoot. Not even at home! Always wear shoes or slippers. You could step on something and get a scratch or cut.

Inspect your feet daily. Check for cuts, blisters, redness, swelling, warmth, callus formation, or nail problems. Use a magnifying hand mirror or family member to look at the bottom of your feet if needed. Call your doctor if you notice anything.

Gently wash your feet in lukewarm (not hot!) water. Keep your feet clean by washing them daily with soft washcloth or sponge. Carefully check water temperature. Dry by blotting or patting, and carefully dry between the toes.

Moisturize your feet - but not between your toes. Use a moisturizer daily to keep dry skin from itching or cracking. But DON'T moisturize between the toes - that could encourage a fungal infection.

Cut nails carefully. Cut them straight across and file the edges. Don't cut nails too short, as this could lead to ingrown toe nails. If you have concerns about your nails, consult your doctor.

Never treat corns and calluses yourself. No "bathroom surgery" or medicated pads. Visit your doctor for appropriate treatment.

Keep your feet warm and dry. Don't let your feet get wet in snow or rain. Wear clean warm socks to bed if your feet get cold at night. NEVER use a heating pad or hot water bottle.

Keep the blood flowing to your feet. Put your feet up when sitting. Wiggle your toes and move your ankles daily. Avoid crossing your legs for long periods of time. DO NOT SMOKE.

Get periodic foot exams. A complete foot exam should be performed at least annually – more often if you have foot problems.

Take care of your diabetes. Keeping your blood sugar levels under control has proven to slow the progression of diabetic foot complications.

Chris Byrne, DPM / Brandon Slade, DPM