



Diabetic Foot Care

Patient Handout

Diabetic foot complications are the Number #1 reason for non-traumatic foot amputations in the United States and cause one in five people with diabetes to be hospitalized. Proper foot care can help prevent or delay this occurrence.

WHAT CAUSES FOOT PROBLEMS WITH DIABETES?

In patients with diabetes, blood flow to the feet may be impaired. This means that your foot is less able to fight infection or heal itself. Nerve damage (neuropathy) may be present, causing a lack of sensation in the feet. Pain may not be felt, even with injury present. This may predispose you to foot ulcers and infection. The skin may also become dry, cracking and peeling easily, since neuropathy may cause sweating to be impaired. The following guidelines will help you protect your feet and should be done daily.

1. GOOD BLOOD SUGAR CONTROL

Keeping your blood sugar under good control can help prevent or delay foot complications as well as other diabetes related problems. This will mean self-management of blood sugars with diet, exercise, medication, monitoring blood glucoses, and education in other techniques of controlling blood sugar.

2. INSPECT YOUR FEET DAILY

Visually checking your feet is important, since you may not be able to feel injuries if you have neuropathy. Look for cuts, sores, red spots, infection, swelling or unusual appearing areas. You can use a mirror to help see the bottom of your feet, or ask a family member or caregiver for help. Set a time daily (such as after your bath or shower) to perform this check.

3. AVOID THERMAL INJURY

Never use hot water bottles or heating pads on your feet, which cause tissue injury or burns. Wear socks at night if you feel your feet get cold. Put sunscreen on the top of your feet to prevent sunburn. In the winter, lined boots can help keep your feet warm.

4. SMOOTH CORNS & CALLOUSES

After your bath or shower, when the skin is soft, use a pumice stone and gently rub in one direction, smoothing off corns or callouses. Avoid tearing the skin, and never cut off callouses or corns. Never use liquid corn and callous removers, since they can create a chemical burn. If the callouses become thick, see your podiatrist who can trim these for you. They may indicate a pressure area, and the need for special shoes or inserts to relieve the pressure.

5. EXERCISE

Exercise helps promote blood flow. Check with your health care provider as to which activities are best for you. Walking, swimming and bicycling can help blood flow and do not put pressure on the feet.

6. WASH & MOISTURIZE YOUR FEET DAILY

Warm (about 90-95 degrees) water is best, instead of hot. You can use a thermometer or elbow to assess the temperature. Dry your feet afterwards, with special attention between the toes (to prevent athlete's foot). Rub a thick layer of good lotion or moisturizer that does not contain alcohol (which can be drying), avoiding the area between the toes. Moisturizing will help prevent your skin from drying and cracking, which can lead to infection. Do not soak your feet, since this will dry out the skin.

7. NEVER GO BAREFOOT

Even going barefoot indoors can cause injury. Good fitting shoes and socks are one of your feet's best protection. Choose socks made of cotton or wool, since they will "wick" moisture from your skin. Be sure to check inside your shoes before putting them on. Choose shoes made of canvas or leather, that let your feet "breathe", with good support at the ankles. Don't buy pointed shoes or high heels, which put pressure on the feet. Keep slippers with good soles by your bed to use at night if you get up.

8. DON'T CONSTRICT CIRCULATION

Avoid crossing your legs or wearing tight socks, garters or constricting garments.

9. HAVE YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER CHECK YOUR FEET AT EVERY VISIT

A foot check of pulses, sensation and appearance should be done by a health care professional. If sensation in your feet changes, if you develop severe pain or if the color changes, tell your health care provider. Any time infection, an ingrown toenail, inflammation or a foot ulcer occur tell your health care provider immediately.

10. TRIM YOUR TOENAILS REGULARLY

See your podiatrist or health care provider regularly for routine toenail trimmings. Call us at 888.495.4489 for an appointment.