

Diabetes: How to Take Care of Your Feet



Diabetes can damage many areas of the body, including the nerves and blood vessels that travel to your feet. By giving your feet extra care and attention, you can prevent injuries and infections.

Make caring for your feet part of your daily schedule.

Why is foot care important?

Caring for your feet is important because, over time, high blood sugar levels from diabetes can:

- Damage the nerve endings in your feet, making you less likely to notice when your feet are injured. This nerve damage is called diabetic neuropathy.
- Damage blood vessels all through your body, including those of the legs and feet. Small cuts, sores, and even ingrown toenails take longer to heal and are more likely to become infected.

How can you take care of your feet?

- Inspect your feet at least once a day. This is the most important part of your foot care. You can use a mirror to inspect your feet. If you cannot see well, have someone help you. Check for color changes, blisters, peeling or broken skin, corns, calluses, moisture, sores, and ingrown toenails. Note any areas that tingle or are numb.
- Wash your feet daily. Use warm, but not hot, water. Wash all areas of your feet. Pat (do not rub) your feet dry. Make sure to dry carefully between your toes. Put a thin layer of lotion on your feet, but not between your toes. Keep your nails trimmed. You may want to have someone else trim your nails to avoid cutting the skin around them.
- Wear shoes and socks that fit well. Soft shoes that have good support and that fit well, such as tennis shoes, are best for your feet. You can get hard-sole shoes that provide better arch support and are less likely to be pierced through the sole. Break in new shoes slowly by wearing them for a few hours each day and increasing the hours each week. Wear socks without seams.
- Protect your feet from injury. Before you put on your shoes, check for objects or rough spots inside your shoes or objects pushing through the soles. Inspect your feet for blisters, cuts, or scrapes after outdoor activities. Never go outside barefoot.
- Ask your doctor to check your feet at each visit. Your doctor may notice a foot problem you have missed.
- Have a complete foot exam by your doctor or a podiatrist at least once a year. This exam can detect a loss of sensation in your feet,

which can lead to more serious foot problems.

- Get early treatment for foot problems. Call your doctor even for minor foot problems, unless you have already learned from your doctor how to handle these problems. Your doctor may refer you to a podiatrist or orthopedic surgeon if you need special treatment. What seems like a minor irritation can turn into a serious problem.

How can you avoid injury?

- Wear shoes that fit you well and are in good condition all the time. If you do not want to wear shoes indoors, wear slippers with hard soles and good support. Keep your shoes or slippers next to your bed, and slip them on your feet as soon as you get up. Check your floor and walking areas often to make sure they are clear of anything that can injure you or cause you to fall.
- Wear socks in bed if your feet are cold at night.
- Do not use home remedies to treat foot problems. Home remedies can hurt your feet.
- Be careful when using heat or ice on foot injuries. You may not be able to feel temperature changes, which could harm your feet.

- Apply sunscreen to the tops of your feet when they will be exposed to the sun.
- Wear protective beach or surf shoes when you swim. Wear shower shoes in public baths and pools to prevent athlete's foot, plantar warts, and other contagious problems.
- If you have neuropathy, always check the temperature of your bath or shower using a part of your body that can feel temperature normally, such as your elbow. Do not use your feet to check the temperature.

Talk with your doctor

If you have questions, take this information with you when you visit your doctor.

If after reading this you think you may have a foot problem that needs treatment, call your doctor for an appointment.

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