

## Special Foot Care for Diabetes



It's important to take good care of your feet when you have diabetes. A condition called diabetic foot can land you in the hospital. This condition makes up about 1 in 4 hospital stays in people with diabetes. Diabetic foot means a foot sore (ulcer) caused by nerve damage or poor blood flow in a person with diabetes. If you have diabetes, foot wounds or sores can also lead to serious infection. You may end up with gangrene or need an amputation.

Long-term diabetes often leads to nerve damage (diabetic neuropathy). This damage makes it harder for you to feel small injuries to your feet. Fortunately, you can often prevent these serious wounds by looking at your feet every day.

Here's what you can do to help prevent foot problems:

- **Take care of your diabetes.** Work with your healthcare team to keep your blood sugar in your target range.
- **Look at your feet every day.** Check for sores, cuts, bruises, and toenail changes. Use a mirror to look at the bottom of your feet if you need to. Call or see your healthcare provider if you have cuts or breaks in the skin, have an ingrown nail, or if your foot changes color or shape, or becomes less sensitive. See your provider right away if you see a new sore or if your foot becomes swollen, red, or painful. Stay off your feet if your provider tells you to as part of your recovery. Be on the lookout for changes in your feet. Examples are bunions, claw toes, or hammertoes. You may need surgery.
- **Wash your feet every day and dry them with care.** Use a mild soap and lukewarm water. Always check the water temperature before putting your feet in the water. Dry your feet very carefully, especially between the toes. If the skin is dry, use a moisturizer. But don't use this between the toes. Extra moisture there can lead to fungal infections. Put talcum powder or cornstarch between your toes to keep the spaces between your toes dry.
- **Be careful with your toenails.** Trim your toenails with a nail clipper. Trim them straight across, not into the corners. Use an emery board to gently smooth the nail. Have a podiatrist trim your nails if you can't see or feel your feet, have thick or yellowed nails, or have nails that grow into your skin. If you want a salon pedicure, bring your own nail tools to prevent an infection. Have the staff trim the nails as described above.
- **Wear shoes and socks at all times.** Never walk barefoot, even in your home. Wear comfortable shoes that fit well and protect your feet. Check inside your shoes before wearing them to make sure the lining is smooth, and there are no objects inside. If your healthcare provider tells you that you are at high risk for foot problems, they may advise a specific shoe type. Wear soft, thick socks with no seams. Seams can rub and cause blisters.
- **Exercise.** Walking improves blood flow. It can also help control your weight. Wear correctly fitted walking shoes.
- **Never try to remove corns, calluses, or warts by yourself.** Over-the-counter products can burn or damage your skin. Sometimes this damage can't be fixed.
- **Don't smoke.** Smoking can cause poor blood flow to the feet and make wounds heal slowly. Many smokers with diabetes need amputations.

Finally, take your shoes and socks off and ask your healthcare provider to check your feet every time you go for a visit. A yearly foot exam is advised for all people with diabetes, or more often if you have problems. During this exam, your provider will identify risk factors that can predict sores and amputations. Some risk factors are loss of feeling in your foot, foot deformities, and blood flow problems. The exam can be done either by your primary care provider or by a podiatrist. This is a healthcare provider who specializes in foot care. Some diabetes centers have regular foot clinics.

© 2000-2027 The StayWell Company, LLC. All rights reserved. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions

This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your Healthcare professional's instructions. Copyright Krames LLC.