

Diabetes: Caring for Your Body



When you have diabetes, your body needs special care. This care helps you stay healthy and prevent problems. Exercise and healthy eating are a part of this. You can also protect yourself by taking special care of your feet, skin, teeth, and eyes.

Caring for your feet



Follow these tips to help keep your feet healthy:

- Check your feet every day for redness, blisters, cracks, dry skin, or numbness. Use a mirror to check the bottoms of your feet, if needed. Or ask for help.
- Wash your feet in warm (not hot) water. Don't soak them.
- Use an emery board to keep your toenails even with the ends of your toes. File away sharp edges. A healthcare provider who specializes in care of the foot and ankle (podiatrist) may need to cut your toenails for you.
- Smooth down calluses gently. Or wait until your next podiatry appointment.

- Keep your skin soft and smooth by putting a thin layer of skin lotion on the tops and bottoms of your feet. Don't put lotion in between your toes.
- Always wear shoes or slippers, even inside your home. Make sure that shoes are correctly fitted, not too tight and not too loose. This can cause friction and rubbing of your feet. Change your socks daily. Always check shoes for foreign objects before putting them on.
- Call your healthcare provider right away if your feet are numb or painful. Also call your provider if a cut or sore doesn't heal in a few days.

Preventing skin infections

To prevent skin infections, bathe every day. But use a moderate water temperature. Dry yourself well, especially between your toes. Try to keep your home on the humid side during the colder months of the year to prevent your skin getting dry. Wash any cuts with warm, soapy water. Cover with a sterile bandage. Call your provider if a cut or sore doesn't heal in a few days, feels warm, itches, is swollen, has fluid leaking, or has a bad smell.

Caring for your teeth

Follow these guidelines for healthy teeth:

- Brush your teeth twice daily.
- Floss your teeth daily.
- See your dentist at least twice yearly or as advised.
- Keep your blood sugar in a good range.

Caring for your eyes

Have a comprehensive eye exam with dilation every year by an eye care provider, such as an optometrist or ophthalmologist. Let your provider know if you have any of these symptoms:

- Blurred or cloudy vision
- Dark spots or "holes"
- Flashes of light
- Seeing more floaters than normal
- Poor night vision
- Loss of peripheral (side) vision

If you smoke, quit

Smoking is dangerous for everyone, especially people with diabetes. People with diabetes should not use cigarettes or other tobacco products or e-cigarettes. It can harm the blood vessels in your eyes, kidneys, nerves, and heart. It raises blood pressure. Smoking can also slow healing, so infections are more likely. Ask your healthcare provider about programs to help you stop smoking.

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