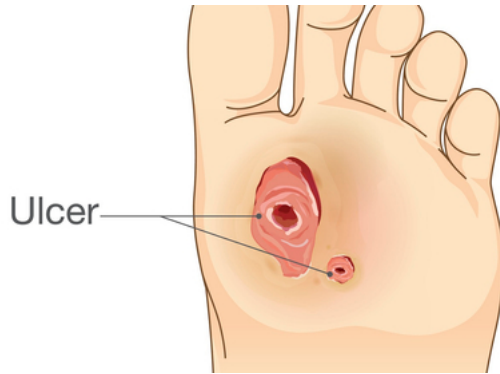


# Diabetic Foot Ulcer: Symptoms and Treatment

What causes diabetic ulcers? Here's what you need to know in terms of self-care, prevention, and the treatment of diabetic ulcer.



## What Is a Diabetic Ulcer?

A diabetic ulcer is an open sore or wound resulting from poor circulation or lack of sensation due to nerve damage caused by elevated blood glucose levels.

The legs and feet are most at risk for these ulcers. Diabetes makes it hard for the body to heal itself, increasing the risk of wounds becoming chronic and raising the risk of infection.

Significantly, nonhealing diabetic ulcers result in a large number of amputations in Singapore. About two major limb amputations are carried out daily to remove lower limbs affected by diabetes-related ulcers or gangrene.

## Diabetic Ulcer Prevention

To reduce the risk of wounds, regular foot care is important for those with diabetes. Take these steps to reduce foot injuries and wounds:

- Check your feet every day for red spots, cuts, swelling or blisters.
- Use a mirror or get help to inspect the bottom of your feet.
- Wash your feet every day and dry them carefully, especially between the toes.
- Moisturise your feet daily, ideally after washing, to keep the skin soft and smooth.
- Massage a thin coat of lotion over the top and bottom of your feet, but not between the toes as the skin is thinner and more prone to splitting.
- File away hard skin patches on the sole of the feet or toes at least once a week to prevents foot ulcers from forming underneath.
- Keep toenails trimmed to prevent them from cutting into your toes.
- Cut toenails straight across and file the edges, never into the sides as this causes ingrown nails.
- Always wear shoes and socks, and never walk barefoot to prevent injuries.
- Ensure shoes are comfortable and fit well.

- Maintain good blood circulation to the feet by putting your feet up when sitting, and by wiggling your toes and moving your ankles for at least five minutes, two to three times a day.
- Don't cross your legs for long periods of time.
- Don't smoke. Smoking does great harm to blood circulation and increases the risk of many diseases.

If you are diabetic, regular foot examinations are important to prevent foot and leg ulcers, and to ensure your feet are in good health. Your podiatrist will check for:

- Any loss of sensation
- The level of blood flow to the feet
- Any changes in the shape of your foot to assess the development of pressure points

All these will help detect changes in any foot condition, and will help ensure that early preventive treatment or management can be given to prevent wounds from occurring or getting worse.

*This article titled "Sole Saviours" was first published in ONEHealth Magazine, Issue 6, 2015.*

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