

Signs of a Foot Infection

An **infection** can destroy your foot as fast as a wildfire moving through a dry grass prairie.

If you have an opening (*ulcer*) in the skin of your foot, look out for these symptoms:

1. New pain or swelling in your foot.
2. Fluid draining.
3. Foul odor.
4. Chills, sweats, or fever.
5. Sick to your stomach.
6. No appetite for food.

If you have any of these, see to a doctor or emergency room at an experienced medical center **by the end of the day**.

Your Foot Infection

Action Plan

1. Go to a large hospital with specialist doctors. NOTE: This might *not* be the hospital closest to your home.
2. Ask to see a **surgeon** who treats **foot infections**.
3. Ask to see **specialist** who can check (and -- if needed -- *improve*) the **circulation to your foot**. This might include a surgeon that specializes in vascular, cardiac, or general surgery. Certain other specialty physicians, such as cardiologists (heart specialists) or radiologists may also be able to do this.

You will have a **higher risk** of having a **leg amputation** if you go to a hospital without a specialist who can treat poor circulation.

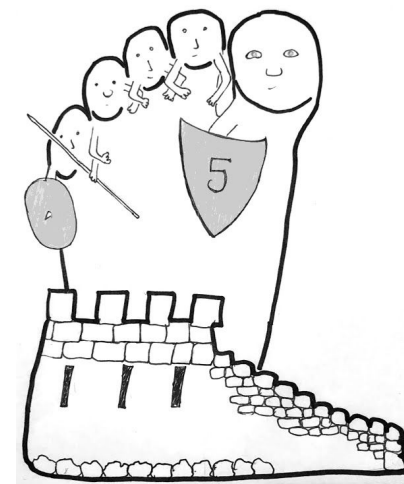
YOU are the most important advocate for your health. Be an active part of your health care team!

Brochure written and illustrated by Neal R. Barshes, M.D., M.P.H.. This material is for informational purposes only and does NOT replace the advice or counsel of a doctor or other health care professional.



Have diabetes?

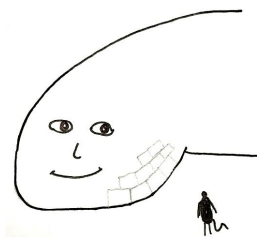
Guard *your* Feet!



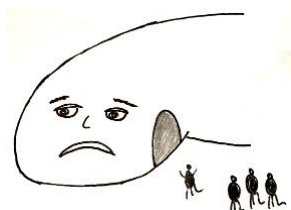
Diabetes *affects* FEET

You wouldn't be where you are today if not for your feet. Take care of them!

Skin that is healthy and whole is best defense against infection.



People with diabetes are at risk for getting sores (*ulcers*) on their feet.



If untreated, these ulcers can allow infections and dead tissue (*gangrene*) to develop. These problems may lead to loss of part or all of your foot (*amputation*).



The best way to avoid a leg amputation is to **maintain healthy skin** on your foot!

What is my RISK?

□ HIGH RISK

- If you've had an amputation of a toe or any other part of your foot.
- If you have *peripheral artery disease* (poor circulation, or "hardening" of the arteries).
- If you get dialysis for kidney failure.

□ MEDIUM RISK

- If you have *neuropathy* (numbness, cannot feel the bottom of your feet)

□ Low/Normal Risk

- None of the above risk factors

What should I DO?

1. **Look at your feet and your shoes every day.** Look out for sores, cuts, cracks, or blisters. Use a mirror if you can't see your foot. Look at the inside or outside of your shoe. See a doctor or other health care provider if you find a problem.
2. **Quit smoking – completely and forever.** Cigarettes cause devastating health problems. Seek support at 1-855-QUIT-VET, 1-800-QUIT-NOW or www.smokefree.gov
3. Never walk barefoot – even in your home. Wear shoes and socks that are comfortable and fit well.
4. Work with your doctor on your blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose control (incl. your *hemoglobin A1c* number).