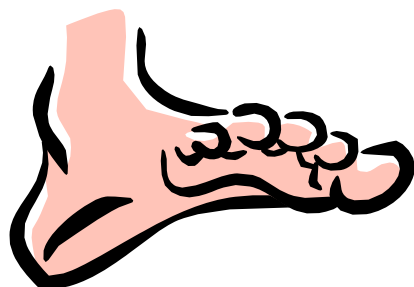


## **DIABETES AND YOUR FEET**

People often fail to appreciate the impact that diabetes can have on the feet and lower limb. Good footcare is important as part of your own management of your diabetes and good blood sugar control helps to prevent complications arising with the feet and legs.



### **How might diabetes affect the feet?**

Diabetes affects your lower limb through two of the main body systems;  
the cardiovascular system (your heart and circulation) and  
the neurological system (your nerves and sensation).

Reduction in blood flow to the feet can cause cramp, cold feet, chilblains, increased risk of infections and poor healing of any injury or wound.

When the nerves are affected (neuropathy), this can lead to reduced sensation in the feet. It might only affect part of the foot and might not be noticed. Pain is one of the

body's protection systems and if it is lost, problems may go un-detected and lead to longer term problems. Risks such as a wound from a stone in the shoe, or scalding from hot water bottles are common when sensation is lost.

Also, allowing your heels to get so dry that they crack open can be a serious risk of infection and/or ulcers. Damage to the nerves can also cause pain, particularly at night.

Diabetes can also mean that you build up hard skin on your feet more quickly due to changes in the proteins in the skin.

### **What can you do to look after your feet?**

Inspect your feet daily for changes in skin colour, cuts, blisters, bruises, swelling and discharge of fluid, pus, etc. Seek help straight away if you are worried. You can use a mirror to check the soles of your feet or ask a relative or friend to help.

Before putting your shoes on, check them for any foreign objects that might have dropped in them and could injure you.

Wash your feet daily, ensuring that you dry in between the toes thoroughly. Use a moisturiser daily on areas where hard skin builds up, but never between the toes.

Never step feet first into a hot bath. Check the temperature first with your elbow to prevent scalding your feet.



Change socks or stockings every day. Natural fibres are best. Keep your nails well trimmed, if you can manage them. If you can't do this regularly enough or get help from a friend or relative, make sure you see a podiatrist privately if you are not able to get a hospital visit. Invest in nail nippers or clippers and keep them clean. Use a file to finish off any rough edges. To prevent spread of infection, don't share these clippers and files with any other members of the family. Ensure you have corns and callus treated by your podiatrist. Moisturising daily will reduce the speed at which hard skin builds up. **Never** use medicated corn plasters, paints or verruca treatments bought over the counter as these can contain harmful acids.



Always buy shoes that are large enough as wearing shoes that are too tight is the cause of many problems. Choose shoes that have a low or no heel and have a good fastening across the middle of the foot. The key rule is to wear shoes appropriate for the activity. Jandals should not be worn too often as they cause hard and cracked skin on the heels.

Avoid walking barefoot as you may injure your feet and not realise it.

#### ***Other general health tips***

Aim to control your blood sugar as best you can. This will reduce the chance of complications affecting the feet.

If you smoke, you should seriously attempt to stop. The risk of cardiovascular disease will be reduced. Also smokers are three times more likely to suffer from fungal foot and nail infections.

Take regular exercise. Walking can help to maintain a healthy circulation

and is good for mental wellbeing. Swimming is a good non weight-bearing form of exercise if you find walking difficult.



Always seek professional medical healthcare if you have any concerns about your diabetes. You should have an annual diabetes foot health check and many GPs do these free of charge.

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