

Patient information

Diabetes Foot Care Advice High Risk - Nerve Damage, Reduced Circulation, Foot Deformity or Previous Ulceration

Podiatry Department - Therapies

Diabetes is a lifelong condition, which can cause foot problems such as ulcers and infections. These problems can happen as a result of damage to nerves in your feet, this is called neuropathy (affecting feeling), and damage to blood vessels reducing circulation.

Corns and hard skin are often painless in the presence of nerve damage and you may not be aware if an ulcer develops. You may have had an ulcer in the past and to avoid this happening again you do need to take extra care of your feet and be extra vigilant.

Diabetes may have affected the blood vessels in your legs and feet reducing the circulation. This can lead to wounds healing slowly.

Even the smallest of breaks in your skin is potentially very serious.

It is better to prevent an ulcer developing than to treat an established one.

The Do's

- See a podiatrist regularly who will check your feet, and provide advice and appropriate treatment.
- Wash your feet daily and dry thoroughly, especially between your toes.
- Check the temperature of the bath water with your elbow/thermometer.
- Examine your feet daily for broken skin, blisters and discolouration or swelling, you may need help from a carer or relative. Using a mirror may also be of some help.
- If shop shoes do not fit your feet, you may need to be referred to an Orthotist (shoe maker).
- Wear the shoes and insoles made by the Orthotist, if you have them.
- Clean breaks in skin, cover with a sterile dressing and seek help.
- Moisturise your feet daily. Do not moisturise between your toes.
- Make sure your shoes fit well i.e. the correct length, width and depth with soft uppers and no bulky seams. Lace ups are good as they prevent your foot sliding about in the shoe. Socks should be free of bulky seams and elasticated tops.
- Examine your shoes regularly for stones, nails and other small objects, which may damage your skin.

The Don'ts

- Don't wear ill-fitting shoes – they may rub leading to blisters
- Don't soak your feet – this can lead to your skin splitting
- Don't walk barefoot – this is one of the most common causes of foot injuries
- Don't burst blisters – this may lead to infection
- Don't sit too near heaters, or use hot water bottles or electric blankets to warm feet up - you may burn yourself without realising. If you want to warm your feet wear socks
- Don't remove corns or hard skin with corn remedies - these contain strong acids
- Your podiatrist will treat your foot problems when you attend clinic
- Don't smoke – this reduces the circulation to your feet.

Important Information

If you notice any signs of infection - swelling, heat, discolouration, pain or a new ulcer, contact your family doctor (GP), Podiatrist, local walk-in-centre or local diabetes clinic urgently.

General Advice

It is important to try and maintain good control of your blood sugar levels, as nerve damage is associated with poor diabetes control.

Blood vessels are also damaged by a high fat diet and smoking. By keeping to the diet recommended by your dietician, taking regular exercise and stopping smoking you can help preserve and improve your circulation.

Individual Advice

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

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