

Person with Diabetes

# Taking steps towards good **Foot Care**

## FOR AT-RISK FEET



Your healthcare professional has found that as a person with Diabetes your feet have a **HIGH RISK** of developing serious problems and any injury is potentially serious.



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive



DIABETES

# Preventing foot problems when you have diabetes



Keeping your diabetes under control (blood sugar, blood pressure and blood cholesterol) and checking your feet daily can prevent serious foot problems. The nerve endings and blood supply to your feet may be affected by diabetes over time. Because of this, serious foot problems may occur without you knowing it.

Your healthcare professional (podiatrist/doctor/nurse\*) who examined your feet today found you were at **HIGH RISK** of developing very serious foot problems. You have

- lost some of the feeling in your feet (neuropathy)  
**and**
- you have poor blood supply to your feet (Peripheral Arterial Disease )  
**or**
- you have both loss of feeling and reduced blood supply  
**or**
- you have had a previous foot ulcer.

This means you have to visually examine your feet closely each day and prevent injury of any sort. You can look after you feet by following the advice in this booklet.

\*A podiatrist is a specialist foot professional in the medical care of the foot, ankle, and lower limb.

# 1

## Check Your Feet Daily

Look at the sole of your foot, around your heels and between your toes everyday. If this is difficult to do, use a mirror or ask someone else to check for you. Check for hard skin, cuts, corns, blisters, spots or any red or swollen area. You are looking for any change from the previous day.

If you can not examine your feet ask another person to.

**CAUTION:** Do not try to remove any hard skin or corns. Your podiatrist will do this for you.



# 2

## Wash Your Feet Daily



Use warm water (not hot) and mild soap. Check the temperature of the water by using your elbow to avoid scalding your foot.

**CAUTION:** Hot water could scald your skin.

Do not soak your feet as this dries out your skin.

Hot water is not helpful in warming cold feet.

Examine your feet daily. Contact your doctor/podiatrist if there is a change in colour or sensation or if you notice an unexplained swelling, break in skin or discharge. Do not delay.

# 3

## Dry Your Feet Thoroughly



Do not forget to dry between your toes.

**REMEMBER:** the skin between your toes can be delicate and split easily. Use a soft towel to dry gently or if it is difficult for you to separate your toes, use a cotton bud.

# 4

## Keep Your Skin Soft

With diabetes, the skin can become very dry. Rub a small amount of emulsifying ointment on the top, heel and bottom of your feet.



**CAUTION:** Do not moisturise between your toes as this may cause a fungal infection.

If you notice breaks in the skin between your toes, contact your nurse, your doctor or podiatrist.

# 5

## Do Not Walk Barefoot

Always wear your shoes to protect your feet. Get into the habit of putting your shoes on immediately when you get out of bed.

**CAUTION:** Walking barefoot could cause you to step on something sharp. Even the smallest cut may cause a problem.



**NEVER WALK BAREFOOT**

Examine your feet daily. Contact your doctor/podiatrist if there is a change in colour or sensation or if you notice an unexplained swelling, break in skin or discharge. Do not delay.

Prevent possible skin damage to your feet by following this advice:

- Avoid walking barefoot on the sand, in the sea water or by the pool.
- You may walk further than usual on sight-seeing/shopping trips so avoid wearing flip flops or new shoes which may cause cuts or blisters
- Avoid sunburn by applying high factor sun cream to all areas of your feet, except between your toes.
- Be aware that your feet may swell in the hot weather and shoes may become tighter and cause cuts or blisters.
- Check all areas of your feet at the end of every day.

Bring a mini first aid kit with a basic range of dressings and antiseptic cream in case you get a cut or blister on your foot for use only until you can get urgent professional assistance.



# 7

## Footwear

**AVOID:** Pointed-toed shoes, slip-ons, high heels, patent leather which does not stretch, leather or hard plastic soles.

**CAUTION:** Check Inside your shoes before wearing for sharp objects, grit or rough edges/seams. Check soles of shoes to make sure there are no holes, glass or nails present.



Examine your feet daily. Contact your doctor/podiatrist if there is a change in colour or sensation or if you notice an unexplained swelling, break in skin or discharge. Do not delay.

## Selecting Good Footwear

- Select soft/cushioned/seamless leather-upper shoes with good support around the arch of your foot.
- Select a good fit, broad and deep enough for your foot, with a lace or soft strap to fasten.
- Have your feet measured regularly by a qualified shoe-fitter available in most good shoe shops.

**CAUTION:** Avoid heavy stitching or heavy buckles/straps that could damage your skin.

**NEW SHOES** – Wear them for 30 minutes around the house and then check your feet for any areas of redness. Gradually extend the length of time but do not forget to examine your feet after taking them off.

**REMEMBER:** If they are not comfortable in the shop do not buy them. You should never have to “break in” shoes.

Your podiatrist will recommend an appropriate type of shoe and where to get them.

If you have been prescribed insoles, you must wear them. They help correct bone problems and distribute the pressure on your feet evenly.



## Socks

Wear clean cotton socks that fit well and are not too tight. You should have no marks on your legs from your socks. Check inside socks before wearing them. They should be made of natural fibres. Avoid nylon as much as possible. If your feet are cold in bed, wear bed socks.

**CAUTION:** Avoid hot water bottles due to the risk of burning the skin on your feet



Examine your feet daily. Contact your doctor/podiatrist if there is a change in colour or sensation or if you notice an unexplained swelling, break in skin or discharge. Do not delay.

# 10

## DO NOT Use Sharp Instruments On Your Feet



Your podiatrist will show you how to care for your toe nails and your feet.

If you have poor vision **DO NOT** cut your toe nails, ask a carer or family member to cut and file them for you.

# 11

## Encourage Good Blood Flow

Try to walk every half hour. Walking improves the blood supply to your feet.

Encourage good blood flow to your feet by exercising your leg muscles when sitting: move your feet in a circular motion, clockwise and then anticlockwise.

**CAUTION:** Avoid sitting for long periods

## Blisters And Minor Cuts

Clean cuts by bathing your foot in freshly boiled cooled water (not hot) and apply an antiseptic cream.

Use a sterile dressing and Micropore paper tape (from a pharmacy) to cover the area.

Contact your doctor / podiatrist immediately if there is any change in colour or sensation.

**CAUTION:** Do not burst blisters.

**REMEMBER:** Change the dressing and check for healing each day. If not improving, contact your GP, nurse or podiatrist.



Examine your feet daily. Contact your doctor/podiatrist if there is a change in colour or sensation or if you notice an unexplained swelling, break in skin or discharge. Do not delay.

# 13

## Things To Avoid

**DO NOT** sit with your legs crossed as this could damage the blood vessels in your legs. This may reduce the blood supply to your leg.

**DO NOT** use over the counter corn or verruca remedies.  
Your podiatrist will treat any hard skin or corns on your feet.

**NEVER USE** Hot water bottles.

**NEVER USE** Foot spas.

**NEVER USE** Circulation boosters.

**DO NOT** sit too close to fires or radiators.

If your feet are cold, wear bed socks!



## When To Contact Your Podiatrist, Doctor Or Nurse

Inform your podiatrist, doctor or nurse if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Pain in your feet
- Numbness of your feet
- Cold feet
- Pins and needles in your feet
- Burning sensation in your feet.

Contact your podiatrist, or your diabetes care team or your G.P. immediately if you notice anything different about your feet.

**Most urgent is:**

- If you find a cut or break in the skin
- If any part of your foot or leg becomes red, hot, painful or swollen
- If you discover your sock wet or notice fluid oozing from under hard skin or from a toenail
- If your blood sugars are poorly controlled for no obvious reason
- If you have a cut or break in the skin and get flu like symptoms.

Examine your feet daily. Contact your doctor/podiatrist if there is a change in colour or sensation or if you notice an unexplained swelling, break in skin or discharge. Do not delay.

## Diabetes Control

Diabetes foot care and control of your diabetes includes:

- inspecting your feet daily
- keeping your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol under control
- following a healthy eating diet
- exercising regularly
- keeping a good line of communication open with your diabetes team.

Smoking increases your risk of poor circulation - a real problem for your feet.



## Contact Numbers

Your podiatrist \_\_\_\_\_

Your diabetes nurse \_\_\_\_\_

Diabetes Specialist Doctor \_\_\_\_\_

Others \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Specific advice about your foot care \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Your next foot assessment is due: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## GOOD FOOT CARE CHECKLIST

- Examine feet daily – use mirror if necessary
- Wash feet daily – dry carefully between toes
- Moisturise soles of feet and heels daily
- Check the inside of your shoes and socks before putting them on
- Wear comfortable footwear and socks
- Never walk barefoot
- Do not use hot water bottles or put your feet too close to a radiator or fire
- Do not smoke
- Keep regular check of your blood glucose levels
- Do not miss your appointment with your podiatrist/diabetes team

Further information and support on diabetes is available from your healthcare professional or contact:



Diabetes Ireland,  
19 Northwood House,  
Northwood Business Campus,  
Santry, Dublin 9  
[www.diabetes.ie](http://www.diabetes.ie)  
Locall 1850 909 909