

## DIABETIC FOOT CARE

Diabetic neuropathy affects the feet more often than any other part of the body. Diabetes interferes with your body's ability to fight infection, so that even a minor foot injury such as a blister, a scratch, or athlete's foot can lead to serious infections or amputation. But serious foot problems are the most preventable complications of diabetes.

Because the nerve damage caused by diabetic neuropathy may make you less likely to notice minor problems with your feet, it is wise to inspect your feet every day. If you have vision problems have someone assist you.

Here are 9 ways to take care of your feet:

- 1) **Check your feet for cuts, sores, red spots, swelling, and infected toenails.** Find a time (evening is best) to check your feet each day. Make checking your feet part of your every day routine. If you have trouble bending over to see your feet, use a plastic mirror or ask a family member or caregiver to help you. *Make sure to call your health care team right away if a cut, sore, blister, or bruise on your foot does not begin to heal after one day.*
- 2) **Wash your feet every day.** Wash your feet in warm, not hot, water. Do not soak your feet because your skin will get dry afterwards. Before bathing or showering, test the water to make sure it is not too hot. You can use a thermometer (90°to 95°F is safe) or your elbow. Dry your feet well. Be sure to dry between your toes. Use talcum powder or cornstarch to keep the skin between your toes dry.
- 3) **Keep the skin soft and smooth.** Rub a thin coat of skin lotion, cream, or petroleum jelly on the tops and bottoms of your feet. Do not put lotion or cream between your toes because this might cause an infection.
- 4) **Smooth corns and calluses gently.** If you have corns and calluses, check with your doctor or podiatrist about the best way to care for them. If your doctor tells you to, use a pumice stone to smooth corns and calluses after bathing or showering. Rub gently, only in one direction, to avoid tearing the skin. Do not cut corns and calluses. Don't use razorblades, corn plasters, or liquid corn and callus removers — they can damage your skin.
- 5) **Trim your toenails each week or when needed.** Have a foot care doctor trim your toenails if you can't see well, if you cannot reach your feet, if your toenails are thick or yellowed, or if your nails curve and grow into the skin. If you can see and reach your toenails, trim them with clippers after you wash and dry your feet. Trim toenails straight across and smooth them with an emery board or nail file. Do not cut into the corners of the toenail.

- 6) **Wear shoes and socks at all times.** Do not walk barefoot – not even indoors – because it is easy to step on something and hurt your feet. Always wear socks, stockings, or nylons with your shoes to help avoid blisters and sores. Choose clean, lightly padded socks that fit well. Check the insides of your shoes before you put them on to be sure the lining is smooth and that there are no objects in them.
- 7) **Protect your feet from hot and cold.** Wear shoes at the beach or on hot pavement. Put sunscreen on the top of your feet to prevent sunburn. Keep your feet away from radiators and open fires. Do not put hot water bottles or heating pads on your feet. Wear socks at night if your feet get cold. Lined boots are good in winter to keep your feet warm. Check your feet often in cold weather to avoid frostbite.
- 8) **Keep the blood flowing to your feet.** Put your feet up when you are sitting. Wiggle your toes for 5 minutes, two or three times a day. Move your ankles up and down and in and out to improve blood flow in your feet and legs. Do not cross your legs for long periods of time. Do not wear tight socks, elastic or rubber bands, or garters around your legs. Do not smoke. Smoking reduces blood flow to your feet. Work with your health care team to control your A1C (blood glucose), blood pressure and cholesterol.
- 9) **Be sure to ask your health care team to:** Tell you if you are likely to have serious foot problems. If you have serious foot problems, your feet should be checked at every visit to your doctor. Check the sense of feeling and pulses in your feet at least once a year. Show you how to care for your feet. Refer you to a podiatrist if needed. Decide if special shoes would help your feet stay healthy.

## **HELPFUL WEBSITES FOR DIABETIC SENSATION AND FOOT CARE**

<http://www.diabetes.org>

<http://diabetes.webmd.com>

<http://ndep.nih.gov>