

Diabetes—Foot Care Do's and Don'ts

People who have diabetes often have trouble with their feet. Diabetes may cause nerve damage that takes away the feeling in your feet. Diabetes may also reduce blood flow to the feet, which makes it harder to heal a sore or to resist infection. Because of these problems, infections and non-healing sores put people with diabetes at risk for amputation. One way to protect your feet is by catching foot problems early. To avoid serious foot problems, follow these tips:

DO's:

- **Wash feet daily in lukewarm (not hot) water.** Use only lukewarm water-the same temperature used to bathe a newborn baby, and be gentle. Dry your feet by patting, not rubbing, and remember to dry between the toes.
- **Inspect feet and toes daily**, checking for cuts, blisters, redness, swelling or nail problems. Use a magnifying hand mirror to look at the bottom of your feet.
- **Moisturize your feet**, but not between the toes-that can promote a fungal infection. Moisturizing will keep feet from cracking and itching.
- **Cut toenails straight across.** Never cut into the corners or taper the nail. Cutting nails too short can cause ingrown toe nails.
- **Get foot exams.** Regularly see a foot doctor to prevent the foot complications of diabetes.
- **Watch for fungal infections of the feet.** This may be an itchy, moist, reddened rash around the toe nails and in between the toes surrounded by tiny blisters. It is important to see your doctor if you think you have an infection.
- **Be properly measured by an experienced shoe fitter** when you buy new shoes. Poorly fitted shoes may cause problems that may lead to amputation. You can be fitted for diabetic shoes and socks at a durable medical supply store. Medicare will pay for diabetic shoes with a prescription from your treating physician.
- **Wear clean, soft white socks**, and change socks daily. When you take your socks off, check to see if there is any blood or fluid from a sore on your socks.
- **Check the inside of your shoes before putting them on each time.** You may not be able to feel a pebble or other object that may be in your shoe,. Also make sure the lining of your shoe is smooth.



Take care of your diabetes. Keep your blood sugar levels under control and control your weight.

Don'ts:

- **Don't go barefoot**, not even at home. Always wear shoes or slippers to avoid stepping on something or getting scratched or cut.
- **Don't wear high heels, sandals, or shoes with pointed toes**, these types of shoes can place pressure on different parts of the foot causing diabetic ulcers. Avoid open-toed shoes and sandals with a strap between the toes.
- **Don't use a heating pad or a hot water bottle to warm your feet**, wear socks to bed if your feet get cold at night.
- **Don't drink alcohol to excess.** Alcohol can damage nerve cells. Drinking may lead to increased pain, numbness or burning that is associated with diabetic nerve damage.
- **Don't smoke.** Smoking restricts blood flow in your feet.
- **Don't wear anything that is too tight around the legs**, wearing socks with a tight band can reduce circulation.
- **Don't try to remove calluses, corns or warts by yourself.** Avoid using medicated pads to treat these conditions.

Prevention:

- Examine your feet daily.
- The American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) urges people with diabetes to take their socks off during every visit to their doctor.
- Have your health care provider do a complete foot exam at least once a year, and more often if you have foot problems.
- Call your doctor if you notice changes in your feet and toes.



If you are interested in receiving future On the Road to Wellness fact sheets at your place of residence, please contact NDCPD at 1-800-233-1737 to leave your name and mailing address.

Sources:

- SideStep, A guide to Preventing and Managing Diabetes and Its Complications. A publication of the Amputee Coalition of America.
- Foot Care. American Diabetes Association. www.diabetes.org

Additional Resources:

- Foot Health Facts. American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons. <http://www.footphysicians.com>

The ND Disability Health Project can provide technical assistance to assist with health promotion, staff training and education, and disability awareness. Contact us at 800.233.1737 or visit our website at

www.ndcpd.org/health



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Vision:

All people in ND have access to information and services they need to maintain good health and wellness. There are no health disparities between people with and without disabilities that are based solely on the presence of a disability.

Pay It Forward.....

Pass it on to others who may find this information helpful.

Health-related information provided in this fact sheet is for informational purposes only and should not replace advice from a medical professional. The ND Disability Health Project is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through a grant (1 u59 DD000278) to the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities at Minot State University. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the CDC.