



Your feet and diabetes

Good foot care can help prevent the onset of major foot problems. Every person with diabetes needs to be careful about their feet. People who have had diabetes for a long time, or if your blood glucose levels have been too high for too long, are at a much higher risk of developing a foot ulcer or diabetic foot complications.

How diabetes affects my feet?

Diabetes may affect the feet in two ways.

Firstly, nerves which allow you to feel pain, temperature and give an early warning of possible injury can be damaged.

Secondly, the blood supply to the feet can be reduced due to blockage of the blood vessels. This may be because you have had diabetes for some time. It is recommended that people with diabetes be assessed by a podiatrist or doctor at least every six months.

What is checked?

- Blood flow to the feet (circulation).
- Foot shape
- Skin for dryness, callus, corns, cracks or infections
- Feelings & reflexes (nerves).
- Toenails.

These checks will determine if you have already developed diabetes complications in your feet. These may include peripheral neuropathy (loss of feeling in the feet) and peripheral vascular disease (poor blood flow to the feet). Feet with these problems are referred to as high risk feet. A low risk foot has normal sensation and good blood flow.

What you should do when caring for your feet?

- Check your feet well every day. If you can't check the bottom of your foot on your own, try using a mirror placed underneath.
- Wash and dry your feet every day.
- Keep your feet away from direct heat such as fires, heaters and hot water bottles.
- Don't wear tight shoes. Buy supportive shoes that fit well.
- Have your feet checked at least twice a year by your Doctor or a podiatrist.

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**Look after your feet:
go to the doctor if you
notice any problems**

- Seek medical advice if you notice any change or sores that don't heal.
- Cut your toenails straight across. If you can't do it yourself, get a health professional to do it for you.
- Use moisturisers to avoid dry skin.
- Avoid walking around barefoot.
- Protect your feet from injury.
- Involve physical activity in your day to day life.
- Check your blood glucose levels regularly.
- Keep your blood glucose levels within the recommended range.
- Keep all appointments with your diabetes management team.

Points to remember!

- Low risk feet can become high risk feet without any symptoms.
- Knowing the risk and taking care of your feet helps prevent amputations.
- It is important to have a professional check your feet at least twice a year.
- Always wear supportive shoes and socks.
- Damage to the nerves and blood supply of the feet, caused by diabetes, can put your feet at risk of damage or even amputation of lower limbs.
- Some area health services offer subsidised podiatry services for people with diabetes.
- Some local Aboriginal Medical Services have podiatry services.
- Department of Veteran Affairs gold card holders are entitled to free podiatry service from private podiatrists. For further information about podiatry services:
- Australian Podiatry Association NSW Website: www.podiatry.asn.au or Phone: 02 9698 3751

It is important to:

- Eat healthily.
- STOP smoking if you smoke.



"Hands on Country"

This painting was created for Australian Diabetes Council by artist Chris Tobin, a Dharug man, and a traditional custodian in the Blue Mountains region. In the artist's words: "The central part of this painting represents the relationship of the clan – it's a unity of people looking out for each other while living independent lives."

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