

Footcare advice for people with Diabetes

Why do people with Diabetes, need to look after their feet

If you have Diabetes, it can damage the nerves and blood vessels that supply your feet.

Your Diabetic foot check will identify if any damage has occurred and tell you what the risk is of you developing a foot ulcer.

The categories of risk are as follows:

Low Risk

This means you have normal sensation and blood flow to your feet. You don't have any foot deformities, and associated overlying hard skin.

You will not automatically be referred to your local NHS Podiatrist, but if you do develop a problem, you can ask your GP to request a referral. You may then be discharged once the problem has been resolved.

Moderate Risk

This means you have one of the following. Either, altered sensation or blood flow into your feet, or you may have a foot deformity with overlying hard skin. As a moderate risk diabetic, you are eligible for NHS Podiatry.

High Risk

This means you have two or more of the following. Altered sensation or blood flow into your feet or you may also have a foot deformity with overlying hard skin.

As a high risk Diabetic, it is essential you are known to your NHS Podiatry team and attend all appointments.

How you can care for your own feet

You, a family member, carer or friend could inspect your feet every day to check for any open areas or sores that could develop into a more serious problem.

- Check for blisters, cuts, callouses or any areas of thick or hard skin.
- Check for infection, by looking for redness, swelling and heat.

You could use a mirror to check underneath your feet.

If you do find any wounds, cover them with a clean, dry dressing and check them every day.

Do not attempt to burst blisters. This can lead to an infection. Just cover them with a dry dressing until they dry up.

Wash your feet daily, and make sure you rinse away any soap, and dry thoroughly, especially between your toes.

Do not soak your feet. This can make the skin more fragile.

When your feet are dry apply a moisturising cream. **Do not** put any between your toes, as it may make the skin overly soggy, and you may develop a fungal infection (athletes foot).

Cut or file your toenails regularly. Follow the natural shape of your toe, and file to remove any sharp edges. Avoid cutting down the corners as this puts you at risk of developing an ingrowing toenail.

Along with your healthcare team, you also need to keep a good control of your diabetes, cholesterol and blood pressure. This means taking your medication as prescribed, quitting smoking, exercising frequently and maintaining a healthy weight.

Footwear advice

- Check your footwear
- Change your socks or stockings every day and check any elasticated tops or bulky seams as these can also cause damage
- Check for any sharp objects that have pierced the sole and run your hand inside to check for any small objects that may have fallen in

Make sure your shoes fit well and don't cause blisters.

AVOID corn remedies, these are not recommended as they can cause damage to your skin.

If you are a moderate or high risk diabetic, avoid walking barefooted as the sensation in your feet maybe reduced and you may not notice if you have injured your feet. You may also fail to notice hot temperatures, so never warm your feet in front of a fire, heater or on a hot water bottle. Check your bath water before getting in.

Attending appointments

It is important to attend your review appointments.

These are usually once a year with a GP or Diabetic Nurse. If you are under the care of a Podiatrist, or any other health professional, they will advise you on how often you should be seeing them.

If you do notice any problems with your feet, such as a wound that hasn't healed within a few days or there are signs of infection (red, hot, swollen), please contact your GP or NHS Podiatrist as soon as possible.

Private Podiatrists should always be obtained by first checking they are on the HCPC (Health Professions Care Council) register to ensure they have the correct qualifications and skills to keep you safe.

Red Flags - Get help if

- You have developed a high temperature, or you feel hot and shivery
- If your foot is painful, red hot and swollen
- Your foot has been persistently painful for a long time
- You have an open wound on your foot, that look as though it is not healing

All the above may suggest you have an infection, so you must seek advice from your GP, Podiatrist or Qualified health Professional. If you are concerned you can also call 111.

Sources of information

Podiatry ESHT Central Booking office - 0300 131 4536
The Health Care Professions Care Council (HCPC) - www.hcpc-uk.org
The College of Podiatry - www.cop.uk
NHS Website - www.nhs.uk
Diabetes UK - www.diabetes.org.uk
NICE Guidelines - www.nice.org.uk
One You - www.oneyoueastsussex.org.uk (For advice on quitting smoking, weight management, keeping active and exercise, mental health)

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4500 Ext: 135860 or by email: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

Hand hygiene

The Trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 0300 131 4500 Email: esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
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The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:
East Sussex Health Care Trust

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