

Person with Diabetes

# Taking steps towards good Foot Care

## FOR AT-RISK FEET



As a person with Diabetes you may develop foot problems. Learn to look after your feet by following the advice in this booklet.

  
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

  
DIABETES

# Preventing foot problems when you have diabetes

Keeping your diabetes under control and checking your feet daily can prevent foot problems. The nerve endings and blood supply to your feet may be affected by diabetes over time. Because you have diabetes foot problems may occur without you knowing it.

You can look after you feet by following the advice in this booklet.



**Examine your feet daily.  
Contact your doctor/practice nurse if there is a change in colour or sensation or if you notice an unexplained swelling, break in skin or discharge.**

\*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.



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

# 6

## On Holiday

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.

# 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.



## 8

### 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.

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

# 9

## Socks

Wear clean, preferably 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.

# 10

## DO NOT Use Sharp Instruments On Your Feet



If cutting your nails, cut them straight across, not too short, don't cut down the sides. Use an emery board to remove rough edges.

If you have painful toenails, or swelling and redness around your nail **MAKE SURE** to attend a Podiatrist for appropriate treatment.

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.

# 12

## 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.

**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

## 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!



## Diabetes Control

Diabetes foot care and control of your diabetes includes:

- inspecting your feet daily
- keeping your blood sugar 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 practice nurse \_\_\_\_\_

G.P. Practice \_\_\_\_\_

Others \_\_\_\_\_

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

## 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
- Do not 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
- Ask your practice nurse to check your feet annually

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



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