

## Diabetes and Foot Care

### *Tips for healthy feet*

*This handout describes why it is important to take good care of your feet if you have diabetes. It also gives tips for keeping your feet healthy.*

### Why is foot care so important?

Over time, diabetes can lead to less feeling or a change in sensation in your feet. This is called *diabetic neuropathy*. Neuropathy can interfere with normal feelings such as discomfort or pain that would usually warn you about a foot problem.

Diabetes is also linked to blocks in the blood flow to the feet. This is called *atherosclerosis*. Low blood circulation to the feet can make people with diabetes more likely to develop infections and take a longer time to heal from an injury.

This is why people with diabetes need to take good care of their feet. Daily foot care helps prevent foot injuries.

Good diabetes control will also help your feet. Paying attention to your food choices, being active, and taking your diabetes medicines will help keep your feet healthy.

If you get a foot injury, tell your healthcare provider right away. Your provider can help you keep a small problem from becoming a bigger concern.

### Tips for Healthy Feet

To help your feet stay healthy:

- Have your feet examined by your healthcare provider at least once or twice a year.
- Check your bare feet every day. If it is hard for you to see your feet, use a mirror or ask someone to help you.



*If you get a foot injury, tell your healthcare provider right away.*

- Tell your healthcare provider if you have any of these problems:
  - Swelling
  - An ingrown toenail
  - Areas with broken skin
  - Signs of liquid or drainage on your sock or footwear
  - Any change in the shape or color of your foot
- Take care of your feet every day:
  - Wash and dry them well, especially between your toes.
  - Pay close attention to your skin and toenails.
  - Use lotion on the tops and bottoms of your feet to prevent dry skin. Avoid using lotion between your toes.
  - Trim your nails straight across.
  - Do not walk barefoot. Protect your feet at all times by wearing shoes and socks.
  - Wear comfortable shoes that do not rub or put pressure on your feet.
  - Check inside your shoes for hidden small objects before putting them on.
- Ask for help with ongoing foot care:
  - *Podiatrists* (doctors with special training in the care of feet) can provide nail care if it is hard to do yourself.
  - Many community and senior centers offer foot-care clinics.
- If you have *neuropathy*, you may not feel hot and cold very well:
  - Do not use hot water bottles or heating pads.
  - Wear shoes when you're at the beach to protect your feet from the hot sand.
  - Use your elbow instead of your feet to test bath water or hot tubs.
- Promote good blood supply to your feet.
  - Do not smoke.
  - Do not sit with your legs crossed.
  - Do not wear tight socks that leave marks on your legs.
  - Get regular exercise. Talk with your healthcare provider about ways to be more active.
- If you need special shoes and you qualify, Medicare can often help with the cost of special shoes.

## Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

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