



Diabetic Foot and Skin Care

WHY WORRY?

Poorly controlled blood sugar levels increase risk for skin and foot infection. Nerve damage due to diabetes also makes you less likely to feel pain. If the foot or skin is hurt, wounds may heal slowly. If the wound is not treated correctly, severe infection can lead to gangrene and amputation.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Wash your feet and skin daily with non-drying soap. Test the water with your elbow instead of your hand or foot to make sure it is not too hot. Pat yourself dry. Use a moisturizer on your feet and skin but not between your toes. Lotion between the toes helps bacteria to grow.

Inspect your feet and skin daily. Look for the following signs:

- red spots
- calluses
- cuts
- dry skin
- flaking skin
- ingrown nails

If you cannot see your entire foot, use a mirror or have someone else look for you. Call the doctor if you are concerned about any wound. If the problem is serious, you may need to see a podiatrist, who specializes in foot care or a dermatologist, who treats skin problems.

To prevent foot injuries:

- Never go barefoot, even for a short distance.
- Shop for shoes in the late afternoon when your feet tend to be larger.
- Always wear comfortable shoes that have been broken in slowly.
- Wear flat shoes with good arch support and a wide toe base.
- Rarely, if ever, wear high heeled shoes.
- Wear shoes made from leather with cotton socks.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE? (CONTINUED)



- Shake out your shoes before you put them on to remove any object that may have fallen in like a pebble or tack.
- Cut toenails straight across and file off rough edges.
- Only have the doctor treat corns, calluses or ingrown toe nails. Never treat them yourself.
- Wear socks to keep your feet warm. Throw away heating pads and hot water bottles. They could burn your feet and skin.

Each time you see the doctor, take off your shoes and socks. Most of all, get your diabetes under good control. You may need help from your medical team with your meal plan, exercise or diabetes medicine. All the foot and skin care in the world is worthless if you don't manage your diabetes properly.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. Do I inspect my feet daily for wounds or infection?
2. Do I wash and care for my feet and skin properly?
3. Does my doctor examine my feet each time I visit?
4. Do I choose the right shoes?
5. Is there anything I can do to improve my diabetes control?

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PUBLICATION NUMBER
FDNS-E 11-7



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