

## **Diabetes Foot Care: After Your Visit - Your Care Instructions**

When you have diabetes, your feet need extra care and attention. Diabetes can damage the nerve endings and blood vessels in your feet, making you less likely to notice when your feet are injured. Diabetes also limits your body's ability to fight infection and get blood to the area that needs it. If you get a minor foot injury, it could become an ulcer or serious infection. With good foot care, you can prevent most of these problems.

Caring for your feet can be quick and easy. Most of the care can be done when you are bathing or getting ready for bed.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments and call your doctor if you are having problems. It is also a good idea to know your results and keep a list of the medications you take.

### **How can you care for yourself at home?**

Keep your blood sugar close to normal by watching what and how much you eat, monitoring blood sugar, taking medicines prescribed and getting regular exercise. Do not smoke. Smoking affects blood flow and can make foot problems worse. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good. Eat a diet that's low in fat. High fat intake can cause fat to build up in your blood vessels and cause decreased blood flow. Inspect your feet daily for blisters, cuts, cracks, or sores. If you cannot see well, use a mirror or have someone help you.

### **Take care of your feet**

Wash your feet daily. Use warm water - NOT hot water. Check the temperature with your wrist or other part of your body, not your feet. Dry your feet well. Pat them dry. Do not rub the skin on your feet too hard. Dry well between your toes. If the skin on your feet stays moist, bacteria or fungus can grow which leads to infection. Keep your skin soft. Use moisturizing skin cream to keep the skin on your feet soft and prevent callouses and cracks. Do not put cream between your toes and stop using any cream that causes a rash. Clean underneath your toenails carefully. Do NOT use a sharp object to clean underneath your toenails. Use the blunt end of a nail file or other rounded tool. Trim your toenails straight across to prevent ingrown toenails. Use a nail clipper not scissors. Use an emery board to smooth the edges. Change your socks daily. Socks without seams are the best because seams often rub the feet. You can find socks for diabetes from specialty catalogs. Look inside your shoes every day for things like gravel or torn linings which could cause blisters or sores.

### **When should you call for help?**

Call your doctor now or seek medical help if:

You have a foot sore, an ulcer or break in the skin that's not healing after 4 days, bleeding corns or callouses, or an ingrown toenail. You have black or blue areas which can mean bruising or blood flow problems. You have peeling skin or tiny blisters between your toes or cracking or oozing of the skin. You have a fever for more than 24 hours and a foot sore. You have numbness or tingling in your feet that does not go away after you move your feet or change positions. You have unexplained or unusual swelling of the foot or ankle. You cannot perform proper foot care.