

diabetes & your feet

Looking after your diabetes and having regular checks will help to delay or even prevent the development of diabetes complications, including problems with your feet.



What is checked?

- > Blood flow to the feet (circulation)
- > Feeling and reflexes (nerves)
- > Foot shape
- > Toenails
- > Skin - for dryness, calluses, corns, cracks or infections

Who checks?

A doctor, podiatrist or nurse will carry out this easy and painless check on your bare feet to assess whether your feet have a LOW or HIGH risk of developing more serious problems.

How do you know if you have LOW risk feet?

Low risk feet have normal sensation and good blood flow.

How do you know if you have HIGH risk feet?

High risk feet have lost feeling (peripheral neuropathy) and poor blood flow (peripheral vascular disease). People who have had a foot ulcer or amputation in the past have high risk feet. Feet with calluses or deformities like claw toes also have increased risk if poor feeling and/or decreased blood flow are also present.

Damage to the nerves and the blood supply of the feet caused by diabetes can put your feet at risk of damage. This damage is more likely if you have had diabetes for a long time, if blood glucose levels have been too high for too long, if you smoke or are inactive.



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As well as following the tips for foot care below, people with HIGH risk feet must take special care to avoid further problems. They are advised to see a podiatrist with sound diabetes knowledge and in some cases may be referred to a specialist or high risk foot clinic.

The booklet 'Healthy Feet are Happy Feet' is written especially for people with high risk feet and is available from your State or Territory Diabetes Organisation on 1300 136 588.

Caring for your feet

- Attend education groups at a podiatry or diabetes centre to find out how to look after your feet (see page 4 for contact details).
- Have your feet checked twice a year by your doctor or diabetes health professional.
- Know your feet well - wash, dry and look at your feet every day.
- Get medical advice early if you notice any change or problem.
- Cut your toenails straight across - not into the corners - and gently file any sharp edges.
- If you can't properly see or reach your feet to cut your toenails, ask someone to do it for you.
- Use moisturisers to avoid dry skin.
- Never use over-the-counter corn cures.
- Don't wear tight socks or stockings.
- Buy supportive shoes that fit well - the right length (a thumb width longer than your longest toe), width and depth.
- Keep your feet away from direct heat such as heaters, hot water bottles and electric blankets.

Keeping your diabetes under control

It is important to:

- > check and record your blood glucose levels regularly.
- > keep your blood glucose levels within the recommended range (usually 4-8mmol/L).
- > be physically active.*
- > eat healthily.
- > DO NOT SMOKE!
- > make and keep (or if necessary re-schedule) all appointments with your diabetes team.

*Check with your doctor or podiatrist before embarking on any form of weight bearing activity.

Points to remember:

- > Low risk feet can become high risk feet without symptoms.
- > Knowing the risk and taking care of your feet prevents amputation.
- > It is important to have a professional foot check at least once a year.

More about podiatry

- Some area health services and local councils offer subsidised podiatry services. Phone your local hospital, council or community health centre to find out more.
- Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) gold card holders are entitled to free podiatry services from private podiatrists.
- Private health funds cover some podiatry services.
- The Podiatry Association in your state will help you to find a podiatrist with specialised knowledge about diabetes.
- A doctor can refer people with diabetes and serious foot problems (such as ulcers or neuropathy) to high risk foot clinics.

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For further information contact

Your State Podiatry Association:

NSW > 02 9698 3751 TAS > 03 6344 2613

SA > 08 8363 4144 VIC > 03 9866 5906

QLD > 07 3371 5800 WA > 08 6389 0225

www.podiatry.asn.au

Australasian Podiatry Council Website: www.apodc.com.au

You may also find it useful to visit the website of the Diabetes Ambulatory Care Centre at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney NSW www.diabetes.usyd.edu.au



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For more information phone **1300 136 588**

or go to our website www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/links_library/index.html

The design, content and production of this diabetes information sheet has been undertaken by the eight State and Territory member organisations of Diabetes Australia Ltd listed below:

- > Diabetes Australia - New South Wales
- > Diabetes Australia - Victoria
- > Diabetes Australia - Queensland
- > Diabetes Australia - Tasmania
- > Diabetes ACT
- > Diabetes SA
- > Diabetes WA
- > Healthy Living NT

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