

# Diabetic Foot Problems

*Smoking greatly increases your risk of developing foot problems.*

If you have diabetes, you are more likely to develop foot problems. Foot problems can be very serious for people with diabetes since it is the leading cause of amputations. Fortunately, you can help prevent many serious foot problems.

## **Take Care of Your Feet**

Wash your feet daily with warm water. Test the water first with your elbow or a thermometer to make sure it is not too hot. Dry carefully, especially between the toes.

If your feet have dry skin, use lotion with lanolin or oil. Don't put lotion or cream between your toes.

After cleaning, inspect your feet carefully for cuts, blisters, bumps, infections and injuries. Sometimes you won't feel the problem, so it is always important to look. Use a mirror to look at the bottoms of your feet. If you can't see well, have a friend or relative check for you. Always be sure to check between the toes.

Cut your toenails straight across, using an emery board to file sharp edges. Don't cut ingrown toenails – see a health care professional, such as your doctor or podiatrist.

Don't cut corns or calluses or use chemical plasters. You can use a pumice stone to file calluses and remove dead skin. Don't walk barefooted, even indoors.

Avoid extremes in temperatures – don't use hot water bottles or heating pads on your feet. Some people with diabetes lose the ability to feel pain and do not feel cuts or burns.

Check your shoes daily for nail points, rough areas, and foreign objects. Wear shoes that are comfortable at the time you buy them – don't wait for them to stretch out. Ask your health care provider about the best types of shoes to buy.

If you smoke, quit. Smoking greatly increases your risk of developing foot problems.

## **Seek Good Foot Care**

If your physician doesn't already examine your feet during visits, ask him or her to do so. If you are referred to a foot-care specialist, such as a podiatrist, be sure to tell them you have diabetes.

Tell your physician immediately if you find injuries, sores or infections. If healing of injuries seems slow or if redness or swelling appears, call your physician right away.



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