

Foot Care

A guide to diabetic foot care



Blue Cross and Blue Shield
of New Mexico

You can take care of your feet!

Foot care is very important for people with diabetes. Nerve damage can cause you to lose feeling in your feet and you may not be able to feel a sore or a blister. Foot injuries such as these can cause ulcers which may lead to toe, foot, or leg amputation.

Keeping your blood sugar (glucose) in good control and taking care of your feet every day can help you avoid serious foot problems.

Check your feet every day

You may have serious foot problems, but feel no pain. Check your feet for cuts, sores, red spots, swelling, and infected toenails. Find a time (evening is best) to check your feet each day. Use a mirror or ask a family member or caregiver to help.

Call your doctor right away if a cut, sore, blister, or bruise on your foot does not begin to heal after one day.

Wash your feet every day

Wash your feet in warm, not hot, water. Don't soak your feet, because your skin will get dry. Before bathing or showering, test the water to make sure it isn't too hot. You can use a thermometer (90° to 95° F is safe) or your elbow. Dry your feet well. Be sure to dry between your toes. Use talcum powder to keep the skin between your toes dry.

Keep the skin soft and smooth

Rub a thin coat of skin lotion, cream, or petroleum jelly on the tops and bottoms of your feet. Do not put lotion or cream between your toes because this might cause an infection.

After bathing or showering, use a pumice stone to smooth corns and calluses. Rub gently in one direction to avoid tearing the skin. Don't cut corns and calluses or use razor blades, corn

plasters, or liquid corn and callus removers. If you have corns and calluses, check with your doctor or foot care specialist.

Wear shoes and socks at all times

Don't walk barefoot – not even indoors – because it's easy to step on something and hurt your feet. Always wear socks or stockings with your shoes to help avoid blisters and sores. Choose socks made of cotton or wool to help keep your feet dry. Check the insides of your shoes before you put them on to be sure the lining is smooth and that there are no objects in them. Wear shoes that fit well and protect your feet.

Protect your feet from hot and cold

Wear shoes at the beach or on hot pavement. Put sunscreen on the top of your feet to prevent sunburn. Keep your feet away from furnaces and open fires. Don't put hot water bottles or heating pads on your feet. Wear socks at night if your feet get cold. Lined boots are good in winter to keep your feet warm. Check your feet often in cold weather to avoid frostbite.



Keep the blood flowing to your feet

Put your feet up when you're sitting. Wiggle your toes for five minutes, two or three times a day. Move your ankles up and down and in and out to improve blood flow in your feet and legs. Don't cross your legs for long periods of time. Don't wear tight socks, elastic or rubber bands, or garters around your legs. Don't smoke because it reduces blood flow to your feet. If you have high blood pressure or high cholesterol, work with your health care team to lower it.

Be more active

Ask your doctor to help you plan an activity program that's right for you. Walking, dancing, swimming, and bicycling are good forms of exercise that are easy on the feet. Avoid activities that are hard on the feet, such as running and jumping. Always include a short warm-up and cool-down period. Wear athletic shoes that fit well and that provide good support.

Tips for Proper Footwear

Proper footwear is very important for preventing serious foot problems. Athletic or walking shoes made of canvas or leather are good for daily wear. They support your feet and allow them to "breathe."

Never wear vinyl or plastic shoes because they don't stretch or "breathe." When buying shoes, make sure they are comfortable from the start and have enough room for your toes. Don't buy shoes with pointed toes or high heels which put too much pressure on your toes.

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