

DIABETIC FOOT CARE

How does diabetes affect the feet?

1. Nerve damage— with damaged nerves, people might not feel pain, heat, or cold in the legs and feet.
2. Poor blood flow— not enough blood flows to the legs and feet. Poor blood flow makes it hard for a sore or infection to heal.

These two problems can work together to cause a foot problem.

Common diabetic foot problems:

Anyone can have corns, blisters, and athlete's foot. If people have diabetes and blood sugar stays high, these foot problems can lead to infections. The infection might cause gangrene (death and decay of the skin and tissue around the sore). To keep gangrene from spreading, amputation (cutting off a toe, foot or part of a leg) might be needed.

- Corns and calluses
- Blisters
- Ingrown toenails
- Bunion
- Hammertoes
- Dry and cracked skin
- Athlete's foot

Guidelines for foot care:

Development of foot problems are more common in diabetics because of impaired circulation and nerve damage which reduces blood flow and sensitivity to pain and discomfort. Proper foot care can prevent many of these problems:

1. Examine feet daily to make sure there are no sores or infections.
2. Wash feet daily with soap and lukewarm water. Dry feet carefully, especially

between toes (pat dry and avoid rubbing). Apply lotion if skin is dry but not between the toes.

3. Keep toenails trimmed, straight across and never dig into the corners.
4. Do not cut or apply chemical removers onto corns or calluses.
5. Keep feet warm but do not use hot water bottles or heating pads on feet or legs.
6. Do not walk barefoot.
7. Wear properly fitted shoes and avoid open-toed or open-heeled shoes.
8. Wear properly fitted stockings. Avoid tight pantyhose or socks with elastic band.
9. Change socks and stockings daily.

Involve your doctor in foot care

- Tell your doctor right away about any foot problems.
- Ask your doctor to look at your feet at each diabetes checkup. Take off your shoes and socks before the doctor comes into the room.
- Ask your doctor to check the circulation and sensation of your feet.
- If you cannot cut your toenails or you have a foot problem, ask your doctor to send you to a foot doctor.

American Diabetes Association recommends a comprehensive foot exam at least once a year (more often for patients at high risk for foot problems).