



# Foot Care for Diabetics

An important part of managing your diabetes is taking care of your feet.

People who have diabetes are more likely to have problems with poor blood flow (circulation) or loss of feeling (sensation) in their feet. Poor circulation to the foot may lead to sores that are slower to heal.

Loss of feeling or sensation is caused by damage to the nerves in the lower legs and feet. This nerve damage occurs as a result of blood sugar levels that have been high over a long period of time. As a result of loss of feeling or sensation, a person with diabetes may not be aware of temperature, pressure or pain.

## For example...

- If your feet get too hot, such as with the use of a hot water bottle or stepping into hot water, your feet can suffer a burn and you will not feel it.
- You may not feel injuries, such as blisters developing.
- You may not feel anything when you step on a sharp object. You can damage your feet and not even know it.



## Taking Care of Your Feet

- ✓ Wash your feet daily with warm water and mild soap.
- ✓ Dry your feet well, especially between the toes.
- ✓ Use lotion to keep skin soft, but not between the toes.
- ✓ Change your socks every day. Wear socks that are in good condition and that do not have tight elastic at the band.

**Foot damage can lead to serious lifelong problems. That is why we need to take care of our feet!**

- ✓ Wear shoes and socks all the time. Make sure nothing is inside your shoes when you put them on.
- ✓ Wear shoes that fit well with good support and have lots of room for the toes. When buying new shoes be fitted for them late in the day to allow for foot swelling.
- ✓ Check your feet daily for sores, cracks, nail problems, infections or color changes. Use a mirror to see the bottom of your feet. If you find any problems, get help from your health care provider right away.
- ✓ Cut toenails straight across.
- ✓ Be active every day. Exercise helps the blood flow to the feet.
- ✓ Have your feet checked on a regular basis by your doctor, nurse or a foot doctor (podiatrist/chiropractist).
- ✓ Remove your shoes and socks to remind them to check your feet.

**Remember...**  
when visiting your health care provider, always remove your shoes and socks to remind them to check your feet.



# Things to Avoid

- ✘ DON'T smoke. Smoking causes less blood flow to your legs and feet.
- ✘ DON'T walk barefoot indoors or outdoors.
- ✘ DON'T use chemicals such as alcohol, peroxide or iodine on your feet
- ✘ DON'T cut corns or calluses with sharp objects such as a razor blade or use corn or wart removal products.
- ✘ DON'T bathe in water that is too hot. Check the temperature of the water with your elbows or arm before getting in to the bathtub or shower.
- ✘ DON'T go out in cold weather without wearing socks and shoes or boots.
- ✘ DON'T use a heating pad, hot water bottle or heated bag on your feet.
- ✘ DON'T get sunburned. Cover your feet to protect them from the sun.
- ✘ DON'T wear tight-fitting shoes, wrinkled or tight socks/stockings, tight sandals, straps or garters.
- ✘ DON'T cross your legs at the ankles or knees for long periods of time, as this decreases blood flow to your feet.
- ✘ DON'T let the skin on your feet get dry and cracked. Use lotion to keep the skin soft, but not between your toes.
- ✘ DON'T leave any sores, scrapes or skin cracks on your feet or legs unattended. Watch the area closely for signs of infection (redness, swelling, drainage, warm to touch, foul odor). If the area does not heal or does not improve in 48 hours you should seek medical help.

