

Diabetes: *Foot problems and foot care*

Why are foot problems common in people with diabetes?

In people with diabetes, high blood glucose can cause nerve damage and poor circulation.

Nerve damage (neuropathy [noo-RAH-puh-thee]) from high blood glucose usually begins in the hands and feet. It can cause painful symptoms such as tingling, aching, or throbbing. It can also reduce your ability to feel cold, heat, or pain in your feet. As a result, you might not know that you have an injury or infection. In people with diabetes, even a small blister or stubbed toe can become a serious problem.

Poor circulation happens when high blood glucose damages your blood vessels and reduces blood flow to your feet. This means that injuries take longer to heal. Over time, poor circulation in your feet can even change the shape of your feet and toes. This can cause problems with the way you walk.

Are foot problems really that serious?

Yes. Foot problems in people with diabetes can be very serious. They can lead to deformed feet, wounds that won't heal, and serious infections that require surgery. In fact, diabetes-related foot problems are a leading reason for leg and foot amputations.

How do I prevent foot problems?

- 1** The best way to prevent foot problems is to take care of your feet every day. See the list of everyday **DOs** and **DON'Ts** on the next page.
- 2** Follow your diabetes treatment plan to control your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol. If you're having trouble with any part of your treatment (medicines, meal plans, or exercise) talk to your diabetes care team. Work with them to make a plan that's right for you.
- 3** Keep your doctor's appointments, and get a foot exam at least once a year. Foot exams help detect foot problems early on, when they are easier to treat. Take your socks and shoes off at each visit to remind your doctor to check your feet.

Your doctor may refer you to a foot specialist who will use special tools to check sensitivity in your feet. Imaging tests may also be needed to see the condition of your foot bones.



When should I call my doctor?

Call your diabetes care provider if you:

- Have trouble following your diabetes treatment plan or controlling your blood glucose.
- Notice a sore or other injury that won't heal or that looks infected.
- Have signs of infection, such as swelling, redness, drainage, fever, or chills.
- Have corns, thick calluses, or warts that need to be removed. (These can develop into sores if they're not taken care of.) Your doctor may refer you to a foot specialist.
- Haven't had a thorough foot exam performed by a doctor in over a year.

Everyday DOs and DON'Ts to protect your feet

Even if you don't have foot problems now, you still need to care for your feet. **Daily foot care is the best way to prevent or catch foot problems early, before they become serious.**

DO:	DON'T:
<p>Wash your feet every day. Use warm (not hot) water, and dry your feet carefully afterwards. Make sure the skin between your toes is dry.</p>	<p>Soak or scrub your feet. People with diabetes have fragile skin, and soaking and scrubbing can cause the skin to break down.</p>
<p>Check your feet carefully every day. Use a hand mirror to look at the bottom of your feet or ask a family member to help you check. Remember to look between your toes. Look for any of these problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cuts or scratches • Blisters or irritated skin • Cracks or very dry skin • Calluses or corns • Puffy, cold, or red feet 	
<p>Gently care for your feet and toenails. The best time for this is after you wash your feet. Scrub gently with a pumice stone to keep calluses under control. Keep your toenails trimmed straight across and use an emery board to smooth the edges.</p>	<p>Use razors, scissors, or harsh chemicals on your feet. To get rid of corns, warts, or stubborn calluses, see a doctor or other professional.</p>
<p>Prevent and treat dry skin. Use unscented lotion or petroleum jelly (Vaseline) on the tops and bottoms of your feet.</p>	<p>Put lotion or Vaseline between your toes. Extra moisture there can lead to infection.</p>
<p>Wear shoes or slippers with good soles that support and protect your feet at all times. Small foot injuries can become serious for a person with diabetes.</p>	<p>Go barefoot, even indoors. Purchase slippers with a hard, protective sole and wear them even when going to the bathroom in the middle of the night. Don't risk stubbing your bare toe.</p>
<p>Choose comfortable, close-toed shoes. Make sure that new shoes are roomy enough to wiggle your toes. Avoid shoes that rub, pinch, or slip. Break in new shoes gradually. You don't want to get blisters.</p>	<p>Wear plastic shoes, flip-flops, high heels, or pointy-toed shoes.</p>
<p>Wear clean, thick-soled socks that fit smoothly and are made of a "breathable" material. Wearing shoes without socks can cause blisters.</p>	<p>Wear socks with holes in them or that have been mended. These may have rough areas that will irritate your skin.</p>

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