

# Foot Care For People With Diabetes

This leaflet gives a summary on how people with diabetes can help to prevent foot ulcers. Another leaflet called 'Diabetes, Foot Care and Foot Ulcers' gives more details.

Most people with diabetes are reviewed from time to time by a doctor and other health professionals. Part of the check is to examine the feet to look for problems as early as possible.

As a rule, the better the control of your diabetes, the less likely you are to develop complications such as foot ulcers. Also, where appropriate, treatment of high blood pressure, high cholesterol level, and reducing any other 'risk factors' such as smoking, lack of exercise and obesity will reduce your risk of diabetes complications.

## Foot care

Research has shown that people with diabetes who take good care of their feet, and protect their feet from injury, are much less likely to develop foot ulcers. Good foot care includes:

- Looking carefully at your feet each day, including between the toes. If you cannot do this yourself, you should get someone else to do it for you.
  - Looking is particularly important if you have reduced sensation in your feet, as you may not notice anything wrong at first until you look.
  - If you see anything new (such as a cut, bruise, blister, redness, or bleeding) and don't know what to do, see your doctor or podiatrist (chiroprapist).
  - Do not try to deal with corns, calluses, verrucas, or other foot problems by yourself. They should be treated by a health professional such as a podiatrist. In particular, do not use chemicals or special 'acid' plasters to remove corns, etc.
  - Use a moisturising oil or cream for dry skin to prevent cracking. But, do not apply it between the toes.
  - Look out for athlete's foot (a common minor skin infection). It causes flaky skin and cracks between the toes which can be sore and can become infected. If you get athlete's foot, it should be treated with an antifungal cream.
- Cut your nails by following the nail curvature rather than 'straight across'. If you cannot see properly do not try to cut your nails as you may cut your skin. Get someone else to do it.
- Wash your feet regularly, and dry carefully, especially between the toes.
- Do not walk barefoot, even at home. You might tread on something and damage the skin.
- Always wear socks with shoes or other footwear. But, don't wear socks that are too tight around the ankle which may affect the circulation.
- Shoes, trainers and other footwear should:
  - fit well to take into account any awkward shapes or deformities (such as bunions).
  - have broad fronts with plenty of room for the toes.
  - have low heels to avoid pressure on the toes.
  - have good laces, buckles or Velcro fastening to prevent movement and rubbing of feet within the shoes.
- When you buy shoes, wear the type of socks that you usually wear. Avoid slip-on shoes, shoes with pointed toes, sandals and flip-flops. Break new shoes in gradually.
- Always feel inside footwear before you put them on (to check for stones, rough edges, etc).
- If your feet are an abnormal shape, or if you have bunions or other foot problems, you may need specially fitted shoes to stop your feet rubbing.
- Tips to avoid foot burns include: check the bath temperature with your hand before stepping in; do not use hot water bottles, electric blankets or foot spas; do not sit too close to fires.

And finally - if you do develop a break in the skin or an ulcer, then see your doctor straight away.