

## Your Diabetes Foot Care Program

Every day you depend on your feet to keep you moving. But when you have diabetes, your feet need special care. Even a small foot problem can become very serious. So don't take your feet for granted. By working with your diabetes health care team, you can learn how to protect your feet and keep them healthy.



### Evaluating Your Feet

An evaluation helps your health care provider check the condition of your feet. The evaluation includes a review of your diabetes history and overall health. It may also include a foot exam, X-rays, or other tests. These can help show problems beneath the skin that you can't see or feel.

### Medical History

You will be asked about your overall health and any history of foot problems. You'll also discuss your diabetes history, such as whether your blood sugar level has changed over time. It also includes questions about sensations of pain, tingling, pins and needles, or numbness. Doctors would also want to know if you have high blood pressure and heart disease, or if you smoke. Be sure to mention any medications, supplements, or herbal remedies you take.

### Foot Exam

A foot exam checks the condition of different parts of your foot. First, your skin and nails are examined for any signs of infection. Blood flow is checked by feeling for the pulses in each foot. You may also have tests to study the nerves in the foot. These include using a small filament (wire) to see how sensitive your feet are. In certain cases, you will be asked to walk a short distance to check for bone, joint, and muscle problems.

### Diagnostic Tests

If needed, your health care provider will suggest certain tests to learn more about your feet. These include:

- **Doppler tests** to measure blood flow in the feet and lower leg.
- **X-rays**, which can show bone or joint problems.

- **Other imaging tests**, such as an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), bone scan, and CT (computed tomography) scan. These can help show bone infections.
- **Other tests**, such as vascular tests, which study the blood flow in your feet and legs. You may also have nerve studies to learn how sensitive your feet are.

### **Creating a Foot Care Program**

Based on the evaluation, your health care provider will create a foot care program for you. Your program may be as simple as starting a daily self-care routine and changing the types of shoes you wear. It may also involve treating minor foot problems, such as a corn or blister. In some cases, surgery will be needed to treat an infection.

### **Preventing Problems**

When you have diabetes, it's easier to prevent problems than to treat them later on. So see your health care team for regular checkups and foot care. Your health care team can also help you learn more about caring for your feet at home. For example, you may be told to avoid walking barefoot. Or you may be told that special footwear is needed to protect your feet.

### **Have Regular Checkups**

Foot problems can develop quickly. So be sure to follow your health care team's schedule for regular checkups. During office visits, take off your shoes and socks as soon as you get in the exam room. Ask your health care provider to examine your feet for problems. This will make it easier to find and treat small skin irritations before they get worse. Regular checkups can also help keep track of the blood flow and feeling in your feet. If you have neuropathy (lack of feeling in your feet), you will need to have checkups more often.

### **Learn About Self-Care**

The more you know about diabetes and your feet, the easier it will be to prevent problems. Members of your health care team can teach you how to inspect your feet and teach you to look for warning signs. They can also give you other foot care tips. During office visits, be sure to ask any questions you have.

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