

DIABETES FOOT CARE 101

A basic foot care guide for persons living with diabetes and their care givers

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WORLD **DIABETES** FOUNDATION



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INTRODUCTION

Your feet are very important. They take you wherever you need to walk to. You need them for your life time, so it is very important for you to take good care of your feet. This becomes even more important if you are living with diabetes mellitus. This is because diabetes mellitus is a leading cause of non-traumatic lower limb amputations world-wide.

Prevention is better than cure; so it is important for you to take extra care of your feet if you are living with diabetes, to prevent diabetes related foot problems

DAILY SELF-CARE FOOT CHECK LIST

- Take proper care of your diabetes. Take your medications, follow your diet plan, exercise regularly, monitor your blood sugar regularly and keep your appointment with your diabetes health care team. Be sure to ask your doctor or any other member of your diabetes health care team any questions you may have regarding your diabetes care.
- Check your feet every day, looking out for colour changes, red spots, cuts, swelling, and blisters. If you cannot see the bottoms of your



feet, use a mirror or ask someone for help.

- Be more physically active and remember to plan your physical activity program with your health care team.

- Keep your feet clean with daily washing in clean water, keeping them dry, especially in-between the toes.
- Keep your skin soft and smooth by rubbing skin lotion over the tops and bottoms of your feet, but not between your toes.
- Trim your toe nails when needed. NEVER use a razor blade on your nails. Uses only nail clippers, or nail file. Trim your toenails straight across and file the edges with an emery board or nail file.
- Never walk barefoot, as it increases your chances of injuring them. Wear comfortable shoes that fit well and protect your feet. Check inside your shoes before wearing them. Make sure the lining is smooth and there are no objects inside



- Protect your feet from hot and cold temperatures. Wear shoes at the beach or on hot pavements to protect your feet from getting burnt. Don't put your feet into hot water. Check water temperature with your elbow before putting your feet in it.
- Never use hot water bottles, heating pads, or electric blankets. You can burn your feet without realizing it.



- Keep the blood flowing to your feet. Put your feet up when sitting. Wiggle your toes and move your ankles up and down for 5 minutes, two (2) or three (3) times a day. Don't cross your legs for long periods of time.
- If you smoke, quit smoking; because it increases your risk for heart attacks, lung disease and blood vessel diseases.



BUYING SHOES



- Getting shoes that fit well is necessary if you are living with diabetes. This is because shoes that are too tight or too big can cause problems for your feet.
- The best time to buy shoes is in the late afternoon; this is because in the afternoon and evenings most people's feet are a bit bigger. That time you are sure to get a good fitting for your shoes, but if you decide to buy

shoes in the morning when your feet are smallest, the shoes may get too tight as the day progresses.

- Be sure to avoid shoes with a narrow toe-box, as they squash the toes and can cause injuries in addition to foot deformities. Avoid shoes that are too tight, or high-heeled shoes.

NARROW TOEBOX



- Avoid thong sandals and slippers. Persons living with diabetes should avoid thong slippers or sandals as they may cause injury to the feet if not well fitted.



CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD FOOT WEAR

The shoes should be adjustable: An adjustable closure, such as shoelaces or no-tie straps, can allow for different foot needs, day to day and hour to hour.



Wide Toe Box: Squeezing feet into too-small and too-narrow shoes can lead to pain, bruises and deformities. So when buying shoes make sure you can move your toes inside them. This will prevent your toes from rubbing against each other, and developing foot problems.



Suitable Shoe Material: Choose shoes made of Leather or microfiber. These materials expand, preventing irritation and friction if your foot swells. A shoe that is rigid and unable to expand is a shoe that will cause a blister.

Special Foot Bed: Inspect the inside of the shoes. Make sure it has a foot bed that is wide and made with shock-absorbing materials. Your Podiatrist or foot-care specialist may also recommend a custom insert, which can relieve heel or arch pain, and can take pressure off areas that might be prone to calluses.

CHOOSING SOCKS

The layer between the shoe and your foot is important. When you are fitted for your shoes, make sure you wear the same kind of socks you'll wear with the shoes. Socks that fit appropriately are very important: Don't wear socks that are too tight. They will cut into your leg or ankle. Avoid over-sized socks that fall down your ankle and bunch up in your shoes. These too can cause injury to your feet.

Avoid socks that have seams as they can cause rubbing or irritation that can lead to a blister or callus.



Seamless socks ✓



Socks with seam ✗

- A breathable material, such as cotton, or a wicking material, such as microfiber, can reduce your chances of getting feet infection.
- DO talk to your doctor: If you have circulation problems you may need a compression sock or stocking.

THERAPEUTIC FOOTWEAR

- These are special shoes fitted By a Professional: Your feet would be measured and the shoes fitted by the professional, such as a podiatrist or orthotist.
- They are extra deep: An extra-deep shoe cradles your foot. Support around your ankle gives you more stability. The extra depth gives foot deformities such as bunions and hammer toes the space they need. A deeper shoe also gives you room for an insert or orthotic.



- ❖ They may not look fashionable or attractive but do protect your feet from further injury and amputation
- ❖ Who Needs a Special Shoe? In people with existing foot problems like bunions and hammer toes; therapeutic shoes can help them prevent more complications. Also people with a previous amputation, past ulcers, calluses that could lead to foot ulcers, nerve damage (neuropathy), poor circulation, or a foot deformity will also require therapeutic shoes.

Final Words:

It is advisable you buy a health insurance plan to help manage your health care cost. **KNOWLEDGE IS POWER**; Get correct information on diabetes foot care by reading foot-care articles from authentic sources, and asking your healthcare

provider questions. Keep your feet healthy and happy, so they can last you your entire lifetime.

