

Caring for your feet

Tips for people with diabetes

Why is caring for your feet so important?

Your feet need special care because you have diabetes. Over time, diabetes can cause problems with the nerves and blood vessels in your feet.

- Nerve damage can cause you to lose feeling in your feet. You may not notice that you have cut or injured your feet.
 - Damaged blood vessels can reduce the blood flow to your feet. This can lead to cracked skin, poor healing and infections. Smoking can also reduce blood flow.
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1. Check your feet and legs each day



Check your feet for:

- cuts, blisters and bruises
- corns or calluses
- dry, cracked skin
- thick, flaky toenails

Check your legs and feet for any pain, swelling or redness.

Use a mirror to see the bottom of your feet. Don't forget to look between your toes.

If you have trouble checking your feet, ask someone to help you.

Call your family doctor, diabetes team or foot specialist if you notice:

- **pain, swelling or redness in your legs or feet**
- **a cut, blister or bruise**
- **cracked skin, warts, corns or calluses**
- **ingrown or flaky toenails**

Never treat warts, corns or calluses by yourself.

2. Wash your feet each day

Before you wash your feet, check the water with your elbow to make sure it is not too hot. Use a mild, unscented soap. Do not soak your feet. Rinse well and pat your feet dry. Remember to dry in between your toes.

3. Put cream or lotion on your feet

To keep your skin soft and smooth, put a thin layer of unscented cream or lotion on your feet. Do not put it between your toes as this may cause an infection.

4. Wear socks and shoes that fit well

Always wear socks and shoes. Do not go barefoot, even indoors. Cotton socks without seams are best. Change your socks each day.

Before you put on your shoes:

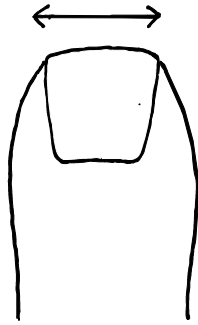
- smooth any wrinkles out of your socks
- feel inside your shoes for any rough spots, bumps or objects

Wear comfortable shoes that support your feet and have enough room for your toes. Do not wear shoes with pointed toes or high heels. A foot specialist can help you get shoes that fit properly.

5. Protect your feet from heat and cold

Wear shoes on hot surfaces such as pavement or sand. Do not use a hot water bottle or heating pad on your feet. Wear warm socks and boots when it is cold.

6. Cut your toenails straight across



To prevent ingrown toenails, cut your toenails straight across.

If you have trouble cutting your toenails, speak with your diabetes team. You may need help from a foot specialist.

7. Keep the blood flowing

When you are sitting, keep your feet up if possible. Do not cross your legs at the knees or ankles. Do not wear socks or shoes that are too tight.

8. Have your health care provider check your feet at every visit

Ask your doctor to check your feet at each visit. The doctor will look for signs of problems, such as nerve or blood vessel damage. He or she may refer you to a foot specialist or recommend special shoes or orthotics (shoe inserts).

**Taking care of your feet can prevent most foot problems.
This only takes a few minutes each day.**