

ENGLISH

# Take Care of Your Feet for a Lifetime

A booklet for people with diabetes



National Diabetes Education Program

Do you want to lower your chances of getting foot problems that can lead to the loss of a toe, foot, or leg?

This booklet tells you how. It's all about taking care of your feet.

Even if you have had diabetes for a long time, this booklet can help you learn more. Use it to help you make your own plan for taking care of your feet.

Share your plan with your doctor and health care team and get their help when you need it.



**Call your doctor right away if a cut, blister, or bruise on your foot does not begin to heal after a few days.**

## Why is foot care important?

Over time, diabetes can cause you to lose feeling in your feet. When you lose feeling in your feet, you may not feel a pebble inside your sock or a blister on your foot, which can lead to cuts and sores. Diabetes also can lower the amount of blood flow in your feet. Numbness and less blood flow in the feet can lead to foot problems.

Foot care is very important for all people with diabetes, but even more so if you have:

- ▶ pain or loss of feeling in your feet (numbness, tingling)
- ▶ changes in the shape of your feet or toes
- ▶ sores, cuts, or ulcers on your feet that do not heal

If you take care of your feet every day, you can lower your chances of losing a toe, foot, or leg. Managing your blood sugar can also help keep your feet healthy.

Work with your health care team to make a diabetes plan that fits your lifestyle and includes foot care. The team may include your doctor, a diabetes educator, a nurse, a foot doctor (podiatrist) and other specialists who can help you manage your diabetes.

# 1

## Check your feet every day.

- ▶ Check your feet for cuts, sores, red spots, swelling, and infected toenails. You may have foot problems, but feel no pain in your feet.
- ▶ Check your feet each evening when you take off your shoes.
- ▶ If you have trouble bending over to see your feet, use a mirror to help. You can also ask a family member or caregiver to help you.



Check your feet every day.

## 2

### **Wash your feet every day.**

- ▶ Wash your feet in warm, not hot, water. Do not soak your feet because your skin will get dry.
- ▶ Before bathing or showering, test the water to make sure it is not too hot. You can use a thermometer (90° to 95° F is safe) or your elbow to test the water.
- ▶ Use talcum powder or cornstarch to keep the skin between your toes dry to prevent infection.

## 3

### **Keep the skin soft and smooth.**

- ▶ Rub a thin coat of lotion, cream, or petroleum jelly on the tops and bottoms of your feet.
- ▶ Do not put lotion or cream between your toes because this might cause an infection.

**Put lotion on the tops and bottoms of your feet.**



## 4

## Smooth corns and calluses gently.

- ▶ Thick patches of skin called corns or calluses can grow on the feet. If you have corns or calluses, check with your foot doctor about the best way to care for them.
- ▶ If your doctor tells you to, use a pumice stone to smooth corns and calluses after bathing or showering. A pumice stone is a type of rock used to smooth the skin. Rub gently, only in one direction, to avoid tearing the skin.
- ▶ Do not cut corns and calluses.
- ▶ Do not use razor blades, corn plasters, or liquid corn and callus removers—they can damage your skin and cause an infection.

**Gently rub  
calluses with a  
pumice stone.**



## 5

**If you can see, reach, and feel your feet, trim your toenails regularly.**

- ▶ Trim your toenails with nail clippers after you wash and dry your feet.
- ▶ Trim your toenails straight across and smooth the corners with an emery board or nail file. This prevents the nails from growing into the skin. Do not cut into the corners of the toenail.
- ▶ Have a foot doctor trim your toenails if:
  - ▷ you cannot see or feel your feet
  - ▷ you cannot reach your feet
  - ▷ your toenails are thick or yellowed
  - ▷ your nails curve and grow into the skin



**Trim your toenails straight across and smooth the corners with a nail file.**

# 6

## **Wear shoes and socks at all times.**

- ▶ Wear shoes and socks at all times. Do not walk barefoot when indoors or outside. It is easy to step on something and hurt your feet. You may not feel any pain and not know that you hurt yourself.
- ▶ Make sure you wear socks, stockings, or nylons with your shoes to keep from getting blisters and sores.
- ▶ Choose clean, lightly padded socks that fit well. Socks that have no seams are best.
- ▶ Check inside your shoes before you put them on. Make sure the lining is smooth and that there are no objects in your shoes.
- ▶ Wear shoes that fit well and protect your feet.



**Check the inside of your shoes before you put them on.**



## 7

## Protect your feet from hot and cold.

- ▶ Wear shoes at the beach and on hot pavement. You may burn your feet and may not know it.
- ▶ Put sunscreen on the top of your feet to prevent sunburn.
- ▶ Keep your feet away from heaters and open fires.
- ▶ Do not put hot water bottles or heating pads on your feet.
- ▶ Wear socks at night if your feet get cold.
- ▶ Wear lined boots in the winter to keep your feet warm.

Protect  
your feet  
when  
walking  
on hot  
surfaces.



# 8

## Keep the blood flowing to your feet.

- ▶ Put your feet up when you are sitting.
- ▶ Wiggle your toes for 5 minutes, 2 or 3 times a day. Move your ankles up and down and in and out to help blood flow in your feet and legs.
- ▶ Do not cross your legs for long periods of time.
- ▶ Do not wear tight socks, elastic, or rubber bands around your legs.
- ▶ Do not smoke. Smoking can lower the amount of blood flow to your feet. Ask for help to stop smoking. Call 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669).



**Put your feet up when you are sitting.**

# 9

## Be more active.

- ▶ Being active improves blood flow to the feet. Ask your health care team for safe ways to be more active each day. Move more by walking, dancing, swimming, or going bike riding.
- ▶ If you are not very active, start slowly.
- ▶ Find safe places to be active.
- ▶ Wear athletic shoes that give support and are made for your activity.



**Bike riding is good exercise.**

# 10

## Be sure to ask your health care team to:

- ▶ check your feet at every visit
- ▶ check the sense of feeling and pulses in your feet at least once a year
- ▶ show you how to care for your feet
- ▶ refer you to a foot doctor if needed
- ▶ tell you if special shoes would help protect your feet



**Ask your doctor to check your feet at every visit.**

### REMINDER



**Cut out the foot care tip sheet in this booklet and put it on your bathroom or bedroom wall or your nightstand to remind you to take care of your feet.**

**Complete the “To Do List” at the back of this booklet.**

## 11

## Take care of your diabetes.

- ▶ Work with your health care team to make a plan to manage your diabetes.
- ▶ Ask your health care team to help you set and reach goals for managing your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol.
- ▶ Ask your team to help you choose safe ways to be more active each day and choose healthy foods to eat.

## Tips for Choosing the Right Footwear

Wearing the right type of shoes is important for keeping your feet healthy. Walking shoes and athletic shoes are good for daily wear. They support your feet and allow them to “breathe.”

- ▶ Never wear vinyl or plastic shoes, because they do not stretch or “breathe.”
- ▶ When buying shoes, make sure they feel good and have enough room for your toes.
- ▶ Do not wear shoes with pointed toes or high heels often. They put too much pressure on your toes.
- ▶ Buy shoes at the end of the day when your feet are the largest so that you can find the best fit.



## Medicare and other insurance for special footwear:

You may need special shoes or shoe inserts to support your feet. Medicare Part B insurance may cover some of the cost of special shoes or inserts. Ask your doctor if your insurance plan will pay for:

- ▶ Depth shoes or inserts. Depth shoes look like walking shoes, but have more room in them. The extra room is for different shaped feet and toes, or for inserts made to fit your feet.
- ▶ Custom molded shoes with inserts.

Ask your doctor or foot doctor how you can get this special footwear.

## Things to remember:

- ▶ Set a time every day to check your feet.
- ▶ Wear socks and shoes at all times.
- ▶ Write down the date of your next visit to the doctor. Go to all of your appointments and ask any questions that you have.
- ▶ Set a date for getting the things you need to take care of your feet: nail clippers, pumice stone, emery board, skin lotion, talcum powder, plastic mirror, socks, walking shoes, and slippers.
- ▶ Stop smoking.
- ▶ Manage your diabetes so you can prevent foot problems.

## To learn more:

### **National Diabetes Education Program**

1-888-693-NDEP (1-888-693-6337)

[www.YourDiabetesInfo.org](http://www.YourDiabetesInfo.org)

### **American Association of Diabetes Educators**

1-800-338-3633

[www.diabeteseducator.org](http://www.diabeteseducator.org)

### **American Diabetes Association**

1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)

[www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

### **American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA)**

301-581-9200

[www.apma.org](http://www.apma.org)

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

[www.cdc.gov/diabetes](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes)

### **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services**

1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)

[www.medicare.gov/health/diabetes.asp](http://www.medicare.gov/health/diabetes.asp)

### **National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases**

National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse

1-800-860-8747

[www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov)

## To Do List:

Make plans now to take care of your feet for a lifetime.

*Check each item when completed.*

☐

Use the foot care tips on the other side of this page.

☐

Put this list where I will see it every day.

☐

Get a pair of nail clippers, an emery board, and pumice stone if my doctor tells me to.

☐

Buy soft, lightly padded, seamless socks.

☐

Buy a pair of shoes that fit well and protect my feet.

☐

Place slippers beside my bed to wear when I get out of bed.

☐

Get a mirror to help me see the bottoms of my feet.

☐

Ask for help from a family member or caregiver if I cannot see my feet.



- ☐ Keep my next doctor's visit.
- ☐ Ask my doctor if my insurance will cover the cost of special shoes or inserts.
- ☐ Ask my health care team about diabetes services and supplies that may be covered by Medicare or other insurance plans.
- ☐ Ask my doctor or nurse to look at my feet at every visit.
- ☐ Talk with my health care team about safe ways I can be more active each day.
- ☐ Stop smoking. Call 1-800-784-8669 to get help with quitting.
- ☐ Work to manage my diabetes to prevent foot problems.

# Foot Care Tips:

Take Care of Your Feet for a Lifetime.

## 1 Check your feet every day.

- ▶ Look at your bare feet every day for cuts, blisters, red spots, and swelling.
- ▶ Use a mirror to check the bottoms of your feet or ask a family member for help if you have trouble seeing.

## 2 Wash your feet every day.

- ▶ Wash your feet in warm, not hot, water every day.
- ▶ Dry your feet. Be sure to dry between the toes.

## 3 Keep the skin soft and smooth.

- ▶ Rub a thin coat of lotion over the tops and bottoms of your feet, but not between your toes.

## 4 Smooth corns and calluses gently.

- ▶ If your doctor tells you to, use a pumice stone to gently smooth corns and calluses.
- ▶ Do not use over-the-counter products or sharp objects on corns and calluses.

## 5 If you can see, reach, and feel your feet, trim your toenails regularly. If you cannot, ask a foot doctor (podiatrist) to trim them for you.

- ▶ Trim your toenails straight across and smooth the corners with an emery board or nail file.

## 6 Wear shoes and socks at all times.

- ▶ Never walk barefoot.
- ▶ Wear shoes that fit well and protect your feet.
- ▶ Feel inside your shoes before putting them on to make sure the lining is smooth and that there are no objects inside.

## **7 Protect your feet from hot and cold.**

- ▶ Wear shoes at the beach and on hot pavement.
- ▶ Wear socks at night if your feet get cold.
- ▶ Do not test bath water with your feet.
- ▶ Do not use hot water bottles or heating pads on your feet.

## **8 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 or three times a day.
- ▶ Do not cross your legs for long periods of time.
- ▶ Do not smoke. Call 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669).

## **9 Be active every day.**

- ▶ Talk to your health care team about safe ways you can be more active.

## **10 Check with your health care team.**

- ▶ Have your doctor or nurse check your bare feet and tell you if you have foot problems or may get foot problems in the future. Remember that you may not feel the pain of an injury.
- ▶ Call your health care team right away if you find a cut, sore, blister, or bruise on your foot that does not begin to heal after a few days.
- ▶ Follow your health care team's advice about foot care.

## **11 Take care of your diabetes.**

- ▶ Ask your health care team to help you set and reach goals for managing your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol.

**National Diabetes Education Program**  
**1-888-693-NDEP (1-888-693-6337)**  
**[www.YourDiabetesInfo.org](http://www.YourDiabetesInfo.org)**

Dennis R. Frisch, DPM of  
the American Podiatric Medical Association  
reviewed this material for accuracy.

HHS' NDEP is jointly sponsored by NIH  
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By joining a research study, people can help  
improve their health and the health of others.  
See [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov) and  
[www.cdc.gov/diabetes/projects/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/projects/index.htm).



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