



Remember, damage to your feet can lead to infection

Avoid situations which may cause damage:

- **avoid** cutting deformed toenails, corns, hard skin yourself,
- **avoid** scorching or burning your skin by sitting too close to fires or using hot water bottles,
- **never** walk barefoot,
- **check** your shoes and socks for foreign objects which may break the skin.

Once a year, your GP, practice nurse or podiatrist will check your feet for:

- loss of feeling,
- circulation,
- general condition.

It is not always necessary for you to see a podiatrist regularly if you have diabetes

However if you do have a **foot problem**, you may receive free podiatry treatment on the NHS.

Your local NHS podiatry service

For more information about NHS Podiatry in Hertfordshire please visit our webpage at: www.hertschs.nhs.uk

or contact:

Hertfordshire Podiatry Service

Head Office
Harpenden Memorial Hospital
Carlton Road
Harpenden
AL5 4TA
Telephone: 01582 711544

If you wish to see a private practitioner, we recommend practitioners who are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council and who describe themselves as a podiatrist or chiropodist. These are protected titles in law and may only be used by persons who are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

For more information visit: www.hpc-uk.org

Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust

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Footcare for Diabetics

Your questions answered



People with diabetes may be at risk of developing serious foot problems.

This leaflet will show you how to look after your feet and help prevent future problems

Did you know?

If you have diabetes, you are prone to foot problems for three reasons:

Reduced feeling (Neuropathy)

Diabetes can affect the nerves in the feet so that the messages that convey feelings such as pain, touch and temperature are not sent normally along the nerves. This can result in reduced sensation or feeling in the feet, known as Neuropathy. This can also present as burning, painful pins and needles sensations.

Pain is the body's warning that something is wrong. People with Neuropathy **do not** feel pain and this is dangerous.

Poor circulation

Some people with diabetes may develop narrowing of the arteries supplying the feet. This causes the blood flow to the feet to be reduced. Our bodies need a good blood supply to heal injuries. If the blood supply to the foot is poor, any break in the skin will take longer to heal. An early warning of poor circulation may be pain in the calf muscles when walking.

Increased risk of infection

People with diabetes are generally more prone to infections. As feet undergo a lot of wear and tear they are subjected to more injuries such as cracks, blisters and cuts. Infections can enter into the skin and spread rapidly.

It makes sense to **look after your feet**.

What can I do to Prevent Problems?

- Take care of your diabetes. Aim to keep your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol within the target range set by your doctor. Doing so may help prevent or delay diabetes related foot problems as well as eye and kidney disease.
- Take regular exercise.
- Stop smoking, smoking reduces blood flow to your feet. Ask your health care professional for help to stop smoking.

Get familiar with your feet

That way you can recognise any changes and act promptly. Examine your feet daily.

Find a time to inspect your feet each day and make this a part of your everyday routine:

- try using a mirror to check the bottom of your feet,
- if you are unable to see your feet, ask a friend or relative to check them regularly for you.

Contact your GP, practice nurse or podiatrist **immediately** if you notice:

- changes in colour or temperature to your feet and legs,
- breaks in the skin or discharge which does not heal up after normal first aid measures,
- sudden increase in swelling,
- increase in pain.

Follow a daily simple routine

Keep your feet healthy, prevention is better than cure!

- Wash your feet daily, but don't soak them for too long as you may dry out the natural oils in your skin.
- Dry them carefully, particularly between the toes.
- Apply a moisturiser to keep the skin in good condition but not between the toes as moist skin here may split.
- If you notice any broken skin, cover it with a dry, sterile dressing.
- If the wound doesn't seem to be improving or is deteriorating then **seek help** immediately.

Do your shoes fit?

Ill-fitting footwear can cause friction and lead to blisters, corns and hard skin.

Key points for well-fitting shoes:

- wide enough for your feet,
- deep enough for your feet - you should have room to wriggle your toes,
- try to make sure the height of the heel is no more than 4 cms (1½ inches),
- foot-shaped at the front - narrow or pointed shoes will squash your toes,
- has a fastening - laces, buckles or Velcro will hold your foot in place in the shoe. Avoid slip on styles of shoes and slippers as they give less support,
- wear new shoes around the house for short periods and then check your feet.