



REACHING YOUR GOAL: Improving foot care

Overview

with diabetes, non-healing foot ulcers are the leading cause of infection and amputation. Prevention is key. Check your feet daily to decrease your risk of foot problems.

OBJECTIVE: Provide the steps needed to reach the goal of improving foot care.

Foot care is even more important for those who have:

- Loss of feeling in the feet
- Changes in the shape of the feet
- Sores or ulcers that do not heal

Getting Started

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease suggests following these steps in preventing foot problems¹:

1. Control your diabetes

- Make healthy lifestyle choices to help keep your blood sugar levels controlled.
- Work with your healthcare team to make a plan that fits best into your lifestyle.

2. Check your feet everyday

- You may not be aware that you have foot problems if you have loss of feeling.
- Look for blisters, calluses, red spots and swelling.
- If you have a hard time seeing, use a mirror to check the bottoms of your feet. Ask a family member to help you.

3. Wash your feet everyday

- Wash your feet in warm (not hot) water everyday.
- Do not soak your feet. Soaking can cause them to dry out and crack.
- Dry your feet well. Don't forget to dry between your toes.

4. Keep your skin smooth and soft

- Apply lotion over the tops and bottom of your feet.
- Avoid lotion between your toes. This might cause infection.

5. Smooth corns and calluses

- After washing, use a pumice stone or emery board to smooth areas of callus build-up. Rub in one direction to avoid tearing the skin.
- Do not use razor blades or liquid corn removers. These can damage your skin.
- Make sure your doctor inspects your feet at every visit. He/she will want to check for pulses and sensations. If your doctor does not offer to check your feet at every visit, take off your shoes and socks. Ask your doctor to check your feet.



QUIZ

QUESTIONS

1. The key to improving foot care is _____.
2. Which of the following is not a step in preventing foot problems?
 - a) Trim your toenails weekly
 - b) Manage your diabetes
 - c) Wear shoes and socks at all times
 - d) Check your feet weekly
3. True or False: Plastic or vinyl shoes are good choices because they stretch and breathe.

ANSWERS

1. prevention
2. d
3. False

6. Trim your toenails weekly

- After washing your feet, trim your toenails straight across. File the edges with an emery board.
- If you cannot see very well or your toenails are thick, have a foot doctor (podiatrist) trim them.

7. Wear shoes and socks at all times

- Never walk barefoot. It is too easy to step on something and hurt your feet.
- Choose socks that are polyester or a cotton/polyester blend.
- Wear comfortable shoes. Make sure they fit well and protect your feet.
- Check inside your shoes. Make sure they are smooth. Check shoes for objects or rough areas inside them. This could cause skin breakdown.
- Break in new dress shoes slowly.

8. Protect your feet from hot and cold

- Wear shoes at the beach or on hot pavement.
- Wear sunscreen on the tops of your feet to prevent sunburn.
- Do not put heating pads on your feet.
- Wear socks at night if you get cold.

9. Keep the blood flowing to your feet

- Put your feet up when you are sitting.
- Wiggle your toes often.
- Do not cross your legs for long periods of time.
- Smoking reduces the blood flow to your feet. If you smoke, stop.
- Do not wear tight socks or elastic around your ankles.

10. Be more active

- Plan your activity with your doctor.
- Walking and swimming are good exercises that are easy on your feet.

Proper footwear

- Athletic or walking shoes made of canvas or leather are good for daily wear. They support your feet and allow them to breathe.
- Try to avoid high heels or shoes with pointed toes. The less pressure on your feet, the better.
- Ask your doctor about special shoes or inserts that will help prevent ongoing foot problems.

Check with your doctor

- Remember you may not feel the pain of an injury. Be sure your doctor checks your feet at every visit.
- Call your doctor right away if you find a cut, sore, blister or bruise and it does not begin to heal in more than one day.