

Understanding Diabetes: The Basics

FOOT CARE

Just as diabetes may cause many changes in your lifestyle, the disease may also lead to changes in your feet that can lead to serious infection from minor injuries to the skin.

High blood glucose levels may cause the narrowing of vessels that carry blood to your feet, resulting in a decreased amount of blood that reaches your feet. As this occurs, you may experience the following symptoms in your feet: coldness; changes in skin color, including pale white to red, blue, or purple; swelling; or pain at night when you are resting.

If you notice a change of feeling in your feet, you may have a complication of diabetes called neuropathy. Neuropathy causes the nerves in your feet to be damaged, which may lead to a burning, tingling, or crawling sensation. The pain may get worse at night, and as the nerve damage increases you may feel numbness or a complete lack of feeling in your feet. Because the senses in your feet may be decreased, it is very important that you take special care of your feet.



Provided by the



fighting the diabetes epidemic right here at home

For your feet to be in their best health be certain to follow these steps daily:

- ◆ Do not smoke.
- ◆ Wash your feet daily with warm water and a mild soap. Because there may be changes in the nerves of your feet, you may not be able to tell if the water is too hot when you step into the tub. Check the water temperature with your elbow to make sure it is not too hot.
- ◆ If your feet are cold, wear cotton socks. Do not use hot water bottles or heating pads on your feet.
- ◆ Do not soak your feet. Soaking dries the skin and can cause it to crack and peel.
- ◆ Use a mirror each day to look at your feet and examine the area between the toes for blisters, cuts, scratches, redness, or changes in the shape of your foot. Contact your doctor if you notice any of these problems.
- ◆ Use a water-based moisturizer, but never apply it between the toes or over breaks in the skin.
- ◆ Cut or file your nails in a half moon shape. Do not try to cut away pieces of dry skin.
- ◆ Have your doctor or podiatrist remove any corns or calluses.
- ◆ Never use tape or band-aids on the skin because they could tear the skin. Wrap wounds with sterile gauze and then apply tape to the gauze.
- ◆ If you ever need a cast, tell the doctor you have diabetes.
- ◆ Always wear cotton socks or stockings. Never wear garters or rubber bands to hold up your socks.
- ◆ Protect your feet. Always wear shoes. Never go barefoot or wear sandals. Even your house slippers should have hard bottoms.

- ◆ Inspect your shoes daily for foreign objects, such as stones, thumbtacks, or torn linings.
- ◆ Buy your shoes in the afternoon when your feet are largest. The shoes should be comfortable and supportive.
- ◆ Whenever you visit your doctor, take your shoes and socks off and ask him/her to look at your feet.

Where to learn more?

The following books are available for loan to members of the Diabetes Association of Greater Cleveland. You may visit our library from 9 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday, or check your local library.

Janet Swenson Lima, RN, MPH, Ronald J. Melincoff, DPM, Ellie Strock, RN, C, CDE, Stephen Powless, DPM: ***A Step In Time.*** Wayzata, Minnesota, Diabetes Center, Inc., 1996

Dunn-Long, Barbara, Milchovich, Sue K.: ***Diabetes Mellitus: A Practical Handbook.*** Palo Alto, CA, Bull Publishing, 1999.

- Ask your doctor, diabetes educator, or registered dietitian for more information.

- Contact the:



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