

## For Better Health: Taking Care of Your Feet

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Caring for your feet is one of the simplest and most important things you can do to care for your diabetes. The two key things you can do are to look at your feet every day to make sure they have not been injured and to protect your feet from injury. Some more specific things you can do are:

### Inspection

- Look at your feet each day in a place with good light. While you are drying your feet after your shower or when you take your shoes off to go to bed at night are easy times to do this.
- Look for dry places and cracks in the skin, especially between the toes and around the heel. Check for ingrown toenails, corns, calluses, blisters, red areas, swelling, or sores.
- Use a mirror if you cannot bend over to see the bottom of your feet or ask a family member for help.

### Bathing

- Wash your feet in warm (not hot) water. Carefully test the water temperature with your wrist, your elbow, or a thermometer so you do not burn yourself.
- Do not soak your feet; this will dry your skin.
- Use a mild soap and rinse well. Dry your feet with a soft towel and make sure you dry between your toes.
- To soften dry feet and keep the skin from cracking, use a cream or lotion. Do not put lotion between your toes.
- If your feet sweat a lot, dust them lightly with foot powder. Wear socks that are mostly cotton, wool, or other natural fibers. Change your socks whenever they become damp or wet.

### Toenails

- Trim your toenails after you bathe, when they are soft and easy to cut.
- Cut or file your nails to follow the natural curve of your toe.
- File sharp corners and rough edges of nails with an emery board so they do not cut the toes on either side.
- Do not use sharp objects to poke or dig under the toenail or around the cuticle. You can easily injure your feet with these tools.
- Ingrown toenails and nails that are thick and tend to split when cut should be cared for by a foot-care specialist.

### Corns and Calluses

- After washing your feet, gently rub corns and calluses with a pumice stone to reduce buildup.
- Pad corns to reduce pressure.

- Avoid over-the-counter corn or callus removers. They are harsh and can hurt healthy skin.
- Never cut your own corns and calluses with a razor blade.

### **Socks**

- Wear soft cotton, wool, or other natural fiber socks.
- Be sure socks fit well and are not wrinkled inside of your shoes.
- Avoid socks or knee-highs with tight elastic tops, which can decrease the blood flow to your feet.

### **Shoes**

- Choose shoes that fit well and are right for your activity for the day. Shoes that do not fit well can lead to sores, blisters, and calluses.
- Protect your feet by wearing shoes or slippers both outside and inside your house.
- Buy shoes that feel good when you first put them on and have room for all of your toes to be in their natural place. Try on shoes in the late afternoon when your feet are likely to be at their largest.
- Choose shoes with top parts that are soft and easily bent. Be sure the lining does not have ridges, wrinkles, or seams. The toe box should be round and high to allow space for all of your toes without pinching.
- To try on shoes, make an outline of each foot from stiff paper or thin cardboard. Put these into each shoe as a test of how they fit. The cardboard should not bend.
- Break in new shoes slowly by wearing them a few hours each day.
- Change your shoes at least once during the day (for example, when you come home from work).
- Before you put on your shoes, carefully check or feel for stones or rough spots that might hurt your feet.

### **Improve Your Blood Flow**

- Begin to exercise every day.
- Avoid being in the cold for long periods of time.
- Wear warm socks.
- If you smoke, ask your doctor for help in quitting.

### **How to Treat Injuries**

- Look at your feet for signs of an injury if you stumble or bump into something. You may not always feel pain.
- If your foot is hurt, stay off it to avoid more damage.
- Treat cuts and scratches right away. Wash with soap and water and apply a mild antiseptic. Never use strong chemicals.
- Cover the injury with a dry sterile dressing.
- Call your doctor if the sore does not begin to heal in 24 hours.