Taking Care of Your Feet

People with diabetes are more prone to foot problems, skin breakdown, and infections that may not heal.
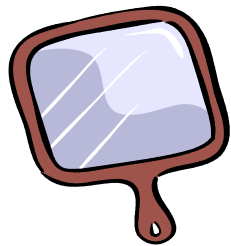
Most people can prevent serious foot problems with just a few simple steps.

So begin taking good care of your feet **today**.

Daily foot care

Check your bare feet every day, including between the toes and soles, for potential red areas, cuts, swelling, and blisters.

If you cannot see the bottoms of your feet, use a mirror or ask someone for help.

Also check after *any* injury to your feet, no matter how small.

Wash your feet every day, and dry them well, especially between the toes.

Keep your skin soft and smooth with a thin coat of skin lotion everywhere BUT between your toes. This prevents dry skin and cracking.

If your feet tend to sweat, sprinkle on foot powder after applying lotion.

Wear well fitting shoes and socks that protect your feet and toes, at all times.

Never walk barefoot.

Wear sturdy, comfortable shoes that protect your feet and fit properly.

If you have flat feet, bunions, or hammertoes, you may need prescription shoes or shoe inserts.

A foot doctor or shoe store that specializes in shoe fitting for people with diabetes can help make shoe recommendations and check if insurance will cover the costs.

Check the inside and soles of your shoes before you wear them. Make sure the lining is smooth and there are no objects inside or stuck in the sole.
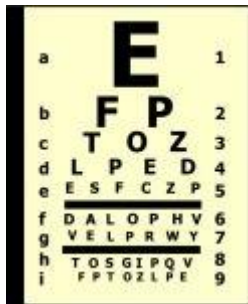
Break new shoes in slowly increasing the wear time each day. Inspect your feet for red areas that could be signs of tightness or irritation from the shoes.

Wear cotton or wool socks that go on smooth with no wrinkles or folds**.**

Avoid elastic socks and hosiery - they may cut off your circulation.

Toenail trimming.

If you have good vision and can reach your toenails, trim them when needed.

If you have trouble with your vision or using your hands, let your doctor or a trained family member do it for you.

Cut toenails **straight across** with a safety clipper (never with scissors) but not too close to the nail bed or quick.

File nail edges with an emery board or nail file.

Protect your feet from hot and cold.

Check the tub or shower water before putting your feet in it to be sure it is not too hot.

Never use hot water bottles, heating pads, or electric blankets. You can burn your feet without realizing it.

Wear shoes at the beach or on hot pavement.

Eliminate obstacles

Move or remove any items, including clutter, you could trip over or bump your feet on.

Light the pathways used at night - indoors and outdoors.

<u>Call your doctor or foot specialist immediately if you:</u>

- Get a cut or break in the skin
- Have an ingrown nail
- Notice a red area on your foot that doesn't go away in 20 minutes.
- Find your foot changes color, shape, or just feels different (for example, becomes less sensitive or hurts).

Have regular foot exams by your doctor

Have your doctor perform a complete foot exam at least once a year - more often if you have foot problems.

Consider a foot care specialist (such as a podiatrist) to:

- Regularly examine your feet and be an extra set of eyes for potential problems
- Trim problem toenails (or all of them if you can't do it safely), corns, or calluses

Take care of your diabetes.

Work with your health care team to keep your blood glucose in your target range.

Watch your diet to help avoid unnecessary highs and lows in your blood sugar.

Exercise regularly.
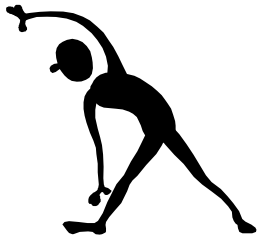
Regular exercise:

- Improves the bones and joints in your feet and legs
- Improves the circulation to your legs
- Helps keep your blood sugar level stable

Consult your doctor before beginning any exercise program.

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, at least 2 or 3 times a day.

Don't cross your legs for long periods of time.

Don't smoke.

Smoking speeds up the damage to the small blood vessels in your feet and leads to poor circulation. Poor circulation is a major risk factor for foot infections and potential amputations.