



HEADS UP ON DIABETES FEET HEALTH

For National Diabetes Week 2022, we're spreading awareness about the impact of diabetes-related foot disease, and how you can help understand and support a loved one at-risk of developing or living with diabetes-related foot disease.

Did you know that research conducted by the Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes has found that four out of five people living with diabetes have experienced stigma at some point? Stigma can lead to people not sharing their diagnosis with others, getting the help and support they need, being interested to learn more about their diabetes or doing what they need to do each day to manage their diabetes and stay well.* Research has also shown that diabetes-related foot problems can be associated with lower quality of life, restrictions in physical activity and distress in those living with diabetes and their caregivers.

Foot health is vital for people living with diabetes and fortunately, many foot problems are actually preventable with best practice treatment and on-going management. Helping a loved one to introduce and maintain a simple daily foot checklist, is one of the best ways to offer support and be actively involved. And by following a daily foot checklist, many people living with diabetes are able to prevent foot ulcers and their more serious complications, such as amputation.



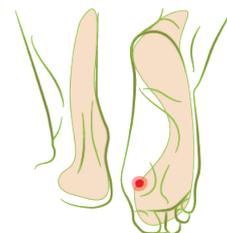
80%
OF DIABETES-RELATED
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Why is feet health so important?

A common symptom of diabetes is damage to the nerves in your feet. The damaged nerve function is called neuropathy, and about half of all people with diabetes have some form of nerve damage.

Neuropathy results in either pain, tingling, weakness or reduced sensation in the feet and lower limbs. A loss of sensitivity in the feet often leads to an abnormal walking pattern causing increased pressure in certain areas of the foot.

The development of callus can be an indication of abnormal pressure being applied and continuing to walk unnaturally on an 'insensitive foot' increases the likelihood of ulcers forming, and reduces the ability of the body to heal an existing ulcer.



Because of the loss of sensation in the foot, a person living with diabetes is less likely to realise when they've injured their foot, as they may not feel the pain. This means they are less likely to notice and treat an injury, allowing it to progress to a more serious, advanced stage.

The most common of these problems is the diabetes-related foot ulcer, which is a wound occurring on the foot, commonly caused by a lack of sensation and/or poor blood supply in a person living with diabetes.

* Sourced from Diabetes Australia

HOW CAN YOU HELP?



BE INFORMED & INVOLVED

Helping to check the feet each day and making sure the correct footwear is worn are some of the easiest ways to prevent foot problems associated with diabetes.

People living with diabetes should have at least an annual foot assessment with their health professional. These assessments are vital to check foot health and also provide an updated risk level for developing diabetes-related foot problems.



BE SUPPORTIVE & PROACTIVE

Diabetes-related foot problems can be confronting and isolating. It's vital to contact your health professional as soon as you can if you notice the following foot changes:

- a current, untreated ulcer or feet show any sign of injury that becomes red or isn't healing
- there are noticeable changes in sensitivity (or loss of sensation) or appearance
- pain, swelling, throbbing, temperature changes in the feet (especially heat) or changes to skin colouration.

People living with diabetes can make up to **180 extra decisions each day** covering everything from food to medication to exercise and more, just to stay well and healthy.