

# ! Act on foot changes

Slapping on a band-aid, ignoring foot changes, or saying 'It'll be right in a few weeks' is putting your valuable feet at risk. Don't wait for the problem to get worse, as time is an important factor in preventing serious complications. If you are experiencing any of the following foot problems call your health professional as soon as possible for examination.



You have a current, untreated ulcer or your feet show any sign of injury that becomes red or isn't healing.



You notice pain, swelling, throbbing, temperature changes in the feet (especially heat) or changes to skin colouration.



Your feet have noticeable changes in sensitivity (or loss of sensation) or appearance.

## Good info to know

Keeping the blood flowing to your feet can help reduce foot ulcers and improve healing. Avoid tight socks or stockings. Avoid sitting in the same position (especially with legs crossed) for extended periods. Exercise, especially walking, not only benefits your diabetes but can help with maintaining blood flow to your feet.

As the nerves in your feet may be less efficient at communicating temperature and pain messages than before, it's important to take preventative measures. Avoid exposure to hot pavements, sunburn, heaters, and hot water. Avoid exposure to the cold and cold water. Wear warm socks and shoes in cooler months, and non-constrictive socks to bed if needed.

## So...how well do you know your feet?

Book in with your GP, podiatrist or other diabetes professional who inspects your feet **at least once every 12 months**, or more regularly if you have a current (or history of) foot problems. It's important to know your risk level as this helps determine how often you need a foot check each year and if you might need to see a diabetes foot team to help with more specialised diagnosis, management and treatment.



Date of foot examination

Name of health professional

Office use

What is my current diabetes-related foot disease risk level?

VERY LOW RISK  LOW RISK  MODERATE RISK  HIGH RISK

Do I need to see a diabetes foot team?  NO  YES

What else can I do to help manage my diabetes and feet health?

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This document is a guide only and is not intended as a substitute for advice from your health professional.  
For more information about diabetes feet health visit [diabetesfeetaustralia.org](http://diabetesfeetaustralia.org)



diabetes feet health  
**Passport**

## Feet!

They move you from A to B, rarely complain and just get on with their important job of supporting you. But outside of putting on your shoes and socks every day, how well do you know your feet?

## Did you know?



- A common complication of diabetes is damage to the nerves in your feet. The damaged nerve function is called neuropathy, and about half of all people living 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.
- Diabetes-related foot ulcers are some of the most common types of foot problems and can occur in people living with both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. The term 'foot ulcer' refers to a break in the skin on the feet. Even minor injuries caused by a small cut, bruise or a blister can develop into a diabetes-related foot ulcer.

Preventing and managing diabetes-related foot disease is a joint effort between your health professional and you. Up to 85% of non-traumatic lower limb amputations in Australian people living with diabetes can be prevented with management and best practice clinical treatment. When a new foot problem develops, it's important to seek urgent medical attention from your health professional to review, as early treatment is key to preventing serious

# Daily foot care is important.

For people living with diabetes, feet are often overlooked as the management of other aspects of diabetes takes higher priority. However, foot problems are common and often debilitating for people living with diabetes. The good news is, there are simple preventative daily steps you can take yourself to help reduce the chances of developing diabetes-related foot disease. By following a daily foot care routine at home and having regular foot monitoring with your health professional, most foot problems are avoidable.



## Check

### ✓ Look for damage

Check for ulcers, cuts, sores, bruises, redness, new calluses and other signs of injury or damage, including between toes and on lower legs. A mirror may be helpful for examining the bottom of your feet.

### ✓ Feel your feet

Take note of changes in feeling, including numbness, tingling or loss of feeling to touch. Be aware you may not feel pain from visible injuries due to loss of sensation in your feet. These injuries still need attention even if they're not currently causing you pain.

### ✓ Check foot temperature

Be aware of the temperature of your feet, and monitor for noticeable changes (hot or cold).

⚠ Convenient times to do your daily foot check are before your shower or before bed.



## Wash

### ✓ Clean daily\*

Use soap/body wash and warm (not hot) water, including between toes and around toenails. Keeping your feet clean will help reduce the risk of infection.

### ✓ Dry your feet

Dry your feet well, paying attention to dry between your toes.

### ✓ Ask for help

If you have difficulty reaching your feet to clean and dry them, discuss options with your health professional and carer.



## Care

### ✓ Moisturise your feet

Apply moisturiser all over your feet and lower legs to keep your skin supple. Don't moisturise between the toes or on broken skin as this may lead to infection.

### ✓ Maintain toenails

Long or ingrown toenails can cut into the skin of your feet, potentially causing infections and ulcers. Toenails should be cut straight across. Seek assistance from a carer or health professional if you have difficulty maintaining your toenails.

### ✓ Check for corns or calluses

Corns and calluses are signs your feet are getting too much pressure. In people with limited feeling, they are also a warning sign of ulcers forming. Don't use over-the-counter corn or callus removal methods as these can cause wounds. Consult with your health professional for treatment options.



## Wear

### ✓ Protect your feet

Wear well-fitting footwear, both indoors and outdoors. As you can easily injure yourself without realising (due to loss of sensation in the feet) by stepping on something hard or sharp. Wear clean socks to protect skin from chafing. Avoid sock seams where possible.

### ✓ Check your shoes

Never store things in your shoes, as injuries can result. Check inside shoes before putting them on, for small pebbles, foreign objects or rough stitching.

### ✓ Avoid ill-fitting shoes

When shoes don't fit well and are too tight, chafing and blisters may result. It's important for people with diabetes to wear footwear that fits, protects and accommodates their feet. Speak to a podiatrist to see if you require specialised insoles or custom-fitted footwear.