

DIABETES

High Risk Foot

Preventing Further Ulcerations

Department of Podiatry
Community and Therapy Services

This leaflet has been designed to give you important information about your condition / procedure, and to answer some common queries that you may have.



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Information for patients and visitors

Introduction

Diabetes is a lifelong condition that can cause serious foot problems. These usually occur because of damage to nerves (affecting the sensation) and blood vessels (affecting circulation).

These changes can be very gradual and you may not notice them. This is why it is very important you have your feet screened every year.

Your screening has shown that there is a high risk that you will develop foot ulcers. Your podiatrist will tick which of the following risk factors you have:

- You have lost some feeling in your feet.
- The circulation in your feet is reduced.
- You have hard skin on your feet.
- The shape of your foot has changed.
- Your vision is impaired.
- You cannot look after your feet yourself.
- You have had ulcers before.
- You have had an amputation.

Controlling your diabetes, cholesterol and blood pressure, and having your feet screened every year by a professional trained to do so, will help to reduce the risk of developing problems with your feet.

If you smoke you are strongly advised to stop. Smoking affects your circulation and can lead to amputation.

As your feet are at high risk of developing further foot ulcers, you will need to take extra care of them. You will need treatment by a podiatrist. If you follow the advice and information in this leaflet, it will help you take care of your feet between visits to your podiatrist.

Hopefully it will help to reduce problems in the future.

Advice to keep your feet healthy

Check your feet every day

You should check your feet every day, preferably at the end of the day, using a mirror if necessary, or ask a partner or friend to help.

Look for:

- Any blisters, swelling or red areas. Do not burst blisters. Try to identify the cause of the redness e.g. rubbing from footwear
- Any soggy skin. This can provide an entry for infection
- Any discharge from under the nails
- Any pain or numbness
- Any hard skin or corns, especially with dark discoloration or redness, or cracks around the heels. Do not use over the counter corn remedies. They are not recommended for anyone with diabetes as they can cause damage to the skin and create more problems

If you notice any signs of infection, swelling, heat, redness or pain contact the Podiatrist, G.P. or Nurse URGENTLY.



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Minor cuts and blisters

If you check your feet and discover any breaks in the skin, minor cuts or blisters, cover them with a clean dressing. Do not burst blisters. Contact your podiatry department or GP immediately.

Early detection and treatment of any problems improves the chances of a good outcome. Every break in the skin is potentially serious and with diabetes infection can spread with alarming rapidity.

Wash your feet every day

You should wash your feet every day in warm water and with a mild soap. Rinse them thoroughly and dry them carefully with a soft towel, especially between the toes.

Do not soak your feet for longer than 5 minutes as this can damage the skin.

Because of your diabetes you may not be able to feel hot and cold very well.

You should test the water temperature with your elbow or ask someone else to test the temperature for you.

Do not use talcum powder as this can leave a residue which when wet could irritate and cause the tissue to break down.

Moisturise your skin

If your skin is dry apply a moisturising cream every day, unless advised otherwise. Avoid the areas between the toes as this may become too moist leading to the risk of the skin breaking down and infections.

Toe nails

Do not cut your toe nails unless your podiatrist advises you to.

Socks, stockings and tights

You should change your socks, stockings or tights every day. They should not have bulky seams and the tops should not be elasticated. Cotton or wool socks are best, as natural fibres help to keep the feet dry by absorbing the moisture.

Hard skin and corns

Do not attempt to remove hard skin or corns yourself. Your podiatrist will provide treatment and advice where necessary.

Over-the-counter corn remedies

Never use over-the-counter corn remedies. They are not recommended for anyone with diabetes as they damage the skin and create ulcers.

Avoid high or low temperatures

If your feet are cold wear socks. Never sit with your feet in front of the fire to warm them up. Always remove hot water bottles or heating pads from your bed before getting in.

Avoid walking barefoot

If you walk barefoot you risk injuring your feet by stubbing your toes and standing on sharp objects which can damage the skin.

Shoes, this advice applies even when walking around in the house.

Check your shoes

Check the bottom of your shoes before putting them on to make sure that nothing sharp such as a pin, nail or glass has pierced the outer sole, or the lining is rough or split.

Also, run your hand inside each shoe to check that no small objects such as small stones have fallen in.



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Badly fitting shoes

Badly fitting shoes are the most common cause of irritation or damage to the feet. The professional who screened your feet may give you advice about the shoes you are wearing and about buying new shoes. They may suggest that you are measured for special shoes to get on prescription.

Prescription Shoes

If you have been supplied with shoes, they will have been made to a prescription. You should follow the instructions your podiatrist or orthotist (the person who makes the shoes) gives you. These should normally be the only shoes you wear. Shoes will normally be prescribed with insoles. These are an important part of your shoes and you should only remove them if your orthotist or podiatrist advises you to. It is your responsibility to keep the shoes in good order. If there are any signs of wear and tear contact your podiatrist to get them reviewed.

Foot spas

The general advice is that these are not suitable for use by diabetics.

Holiday Footcare

Before you travel

Check that your holiday insurance covers diabetes.

Arrange a wheelchair if you have foot problems, especially if you are flying.

Pack a small first aid kit containing plasters, sterile dressings, bandage, tape and antiseptic cream.

Allow plenty of time for your journey.

The journey

Wear hosiery and shoes with adjustable fastening to accommodate swelling.

If in a car or coach take frequent opportunities to stretch your legs.

Flying

Allow plenty of time at the airport.

Don't carry heavy luggage. Use a trolley.

Ask for an aisle seat. Walk up and down every half an hour to prevent swelling.

Do not get dehydrated. Keep sipping water.

Beware of trolleys pushed by other passengers in a hurry.

On arrival

Hot sand and sharp rocks or broken glass can cause serious injuries. Wear plastic sandals on the beach and in the sea.

Use a sun block or very high factor sunscreen or keep in the shade. Take extra care of the legs and top of the feet.

Apply cream to dry skin avoiding the area between the toes.

First Aid

Clean and cover all injuries, however slight.

Check injuries daily. Seek help if they get worse.

Holiday footwear

Never wear new shoes on holiday. They may cause rubbing.

If you have hospital shoes, continue to wear them on holiday.

Wear hosiery to prevent blisters.

If you notice any signs of infection, swelling, heat, redness or pain contact the Podiatrist, G.P. or Nurse URGENTLY.

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If they are not available go to your nearest accident and emergency department. Remember any delay in getting advice or treatment when you have a problem can lead to serious problems developing.

Individual Advice

Who can I contact if I have concerns about my diabetes or my foot care?

Contact your podiatrist immediately if any of the above signs are present for an urgent appointment.

Podiatry Clinic, Diabetes Centre

Tel 01472 875583 – Grimsby

Tel 01724 387714 – Scunthorpe

If an urgent problem occurs on a weekend or Bank Holiday please attend the Accident and Emergency Department at your nearest hospital.

Visiting times

The Podiatry Department is open 08:30am-5pm Monday to Friday.

Concerns and Queries

If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.

For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

For Scunthorpe General Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on

(01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which is situated on C Floor.

Alternatively you can email:
nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Confidentiality

Information on NHS patients is collected in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons (e.g. providing care and treatment, managing and planning the NHS, training and educating staff, research etc.).

Everyone working for the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential. Information will only ever be shared with people who have a genuine need for it (e.g. your GP or other professionals from whom you have been receiving care) or if the law requires it, for example, to notify a birth.

Please be assured however that anyone who receives information from us is also under a legal duty to keep it confidential.

Zero Tolerance - Violent, Threatening and Abusive Behaviour

The Trust and its staff are committed to providing high quality care to patients within the department. However, we wish to advise all patients / visitors that the following inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated:

- Swearing
- Threatening / abusive behaviour
- Verbal / physical abuse

The Trust reserves the right to withdraw from treating patients whom are threatening / abusive / violent and ensuring the removal of those persons from the premises.

All acts of criminal violence and aggression will be notified to the Police immediately.



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Risk Management Strategy

The Trust welcomes comments and suggestions from patients and visitors that could help to reduce risk.

Perhaps you have experienced something whilst in hospital, whilst attending as an outpatient or as a visitor and you felt at risk.

Please tell a member of staff on the ward or in the department you are attending / visiting.

Moving & Handling

The Trust operates a Minimal Lifting Policy, which in essence means patients are only ever lifted by nursing staff in an emergency situation.

Patients are always encouraged to help themselves as much as possible when mobilising, and if unable to do so, equipment may be used to assist in their safe transfer.

If you have any questions regarding moving and handling of patients within the Trust, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department you are visiting.

Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust

Diana Princess of Wales Hospital
Scarcho Road
Grimsby
01472 874111

Scunthorpe General Hospital
Cliff Gardens
Scunthorpe
01724 282282

Goole & District Hospital
Woodland Avenue
Goole
01405 720720

www.nlg.nhs.uk

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