

## Spring is in the Air – Tips for Better Foot Care

**Spring is in the air** and many of us are thinking about a new exercise or diet routine that will help us look great in a swimsuit. But have you thought about your feet much recently? An important part of your diabetes self-management is foot care. In addition to concerns about how your feet will look in your summer flip-flops, foot ulcerations and amputation are the most common consequences of nerve damage associated with having diabetes. You can significantly reduce your risk of problems with proper daily foot care.

The following are the basics of a good self care regimen. If you notice anything that does not look right, or you are experiencing pain or discomfort contact your health care professional. Also keep in mind that some people with diabetes have reduced sensation in their feet. This can mean that you might not feel an injury when it occurs. These tips can help you to avoid this type of problem.

### Daily

#### Inspection

Make sure that you take a good look at your feet each day. Use a mirror to see the bottoms of your feet if necessary. Keep an eye out for dry spots or cracks in the skin and make sure to look between your toes. Check for swelling, sores, blisters, cuts, corns, calluses, ingrown toenails, or spots that are red or pale. If you are doing this every day then problems should be easy to spot.

#### Bathing

Wash your feet every day in warm, but not hot, water, using a mild soap. Soaking dries the skin, so avoid letting your feet sit in water. Dry your feet well, especially between the toes. To soften dry or cracked feet use a moisturizer, but not between your toes where athlete's foot can develop.

#### Shoes and Socks

Make sure that your shoes fit well and don't rub you the wrong way. Look at your shoes before you put them on to make sure that they don't have anything that can poke you or cause injury. Comfortable shoes that are appropriate for the activity you are doing can help you to avoid pain and suffering, as well as injury. Socks should be made of natural fabrics, such as wool or cotton, so that they let your skin breathe. Make sure that they don't have seams that rub the sides of your feet.

### Weekly or as Needed

#### Toenails

Check to see if your toenails need cutting. It is best to do this after washing your feet so that they will be softer and easy to trim. Cut straight across and file the sharp corners to fit the natural curve of your toes. Do not use sharp objects to poke under the toenail or push back the cuticle.

#### Corns and calluses

It is best to rub corns and calluses with an emery board or pumice stone after a bath or shower, when skin is softer. Avoid using corn or callus removers, which may burn the skin or cause damage. Use pads to reduce the pressure if necessary.

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## Special Circumstances

### Circulation

You can reduce the risks of foot related complications by improving your circulation, and you can do this with regular exercise. In addition, avoid using heating pads, hot water bottles or microwave warmers on your feet. These can burn the skin. Try some wool socks to keep your feet warm.

### Avoiding Injuries

Wearing slippers or shoes at all times can help you to avoid injuries. Even at the beach wear some sort of footwear and use sunscreen to keep you from getting a sunburn. When you buy new shoes break them in slowly (1-2 hours per day to start) and change them often (more than once a day) to avoid blisters and sore spots.

### Treatment of injuries

If you injure your foot stop walking on it and treat the injury right away. For scrapes and blisters, a good washing, antibiotic cream and bandage is a good start. For serious injuries, sores that do not begin to heal within a couple of days, or damage that looks worse after the first day contact your doctor.

### Pedicures

Take special care when getting a pedicure. Remember that any injury will make you susceptible to infection so make sure that the salon is clean and that all disinfecting solutions are clean and translucent. Many states have regulations about cleaning solutions, so check your state's rules and make sure that the salon is following them. Your technician should wash his or her hands prior to the treatment, and it is best if they wear gloves. Some people choose to bring their own supplies to the salon, such as a manicure kit, bucket and emery boards. This way you will know exactly how clean the tools are.

Following these guidelines and knowing your feet well can help you to stay healthy and avoid complications. Remember that it is important to have your feet examined by your healthcare professional at every visit and to have a comprehensive exam each year.

## Additional Resources

American Podiatric Medical Association – [www.apma.org/diabetes](http://www.apma.org/diabetes)

Diabetes Self-Management's Foot Care Articles – [www.diabetesselfmanagement.com/2/feet](http://www.diabetesselfmanagement.com/2/feet)

Peripheral Arterial Disease Coalition – [www.padcoalition.org](http://www.padcoalition.org)

Legs For Life – [www.legsforlife.org](http://www.legsforlife.org)

ePodiatry.com - <http://www.epodiatry.com/diabetic-foot.htm>