

Diabetes and your feet

When you have diabetes, taking care of your feet is extremely important.

Over time, high blood sugar levels can cause:

- Damage to blood vessels, decreasing blood flow to the feet.
- Damage to nerves, leading to the loss of ability to sense pain

Decreased blood flow to your feet can cause cuts or sores on your feet to not heal.

This can lead to ulcers and infections and, in serious cases, gangrene and amputations.

Signs of decreased blood flow include:

- Sharp leg cramps after walking short distances or up stairs
- Pain in your feet, even at rest or in the early hours of the morning
- Feet feeling cold
- Feet looking a reddish-blue colour
- Cuts that are slow to heal.

Damage to the nerves in your feet may cause you to not feel pain and therefore not notice injuries to your feet.

Cuts and sores that go unnoticed can cause serious issues that may not be able to be treated.

Nerve damage can also weaken certain foot muscles and contribute to foot deformities.

Signs of nerve damage include:

- Numbness or reduced ability to feel pain or temperature changes.
- Tingling or burning feeling.
- Sharp pains or cramps.
- Muscle weakness.
- Extreme sensitivity to touch — for some people, even a bedsheet's weight can be painful.
- Serious foot problems, such as ulcers, infections, and bone and joint damage.

It is recommended to have a thorough foot check done by a health professional once a year.

Active Health Portland provides foot checks for current diabetic patients and can assist you in caring for your feet.

At your foot check appointment, the nurse will look at:

- Blood flow to your feet (circulation)
- Feeling and reflexes (nerves)
- Unusual foot shapes (bunions, claw toes, hammer toes)
- Toenails
- Dryness, calluses, corns, cracks or infections.

As part of the foot check, the nurse will conduct a Toe Brachial Index (TBI) test.

This test measures the blood pressure in your big toe which helps to identify your risk of complications.

A foot check appointment takes around 45 minutes. There is no out of pocket cost for a foot check.



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Caring for your feet

In between appointments there are a few things you can do to keep your feet healthy:

Wash, dry and check your feet every

day: Check for:

- Redness
- Swelling
- Cuts
- Pus discharge
- Splinters
- Blisters.

Make sure you check:

- Between toes
- Around heels
- Around nail edges
- Soles of the feet.

If you have difficulty with your vision, get someone to check for you.

Care for your toenails:

- Cut your toenails straight across
- Don't cut into the corners
- Gently file any sharp edges

Ask for help if you can't see well or reach your

Cover your feet:

Wear socks made of natural fibres such as wool or cotton.

Try not to wear tight socks or stockings as this restricts the blood flow.

Stay cool:

Keep your feet away from direct heat such as

- Heaters
- Hot water bottles
- Electric blankets.

Treat:

If you find a cut, blister, sore, red area or open crack, you should immediately:

- Wash and dry the area
- Apply a good antiseptic such as Betadine
- Cover with a sterile dressing, available from pharmacies.

Protect your feet:

- Wear a shoe that fits well.
- Check your shoes for stones, pins, bunions or anything else which could cause injury.
- Moisturise daily to avoid dry skin.
- Never use over-the-counter corn cures.

Get medical advice early:

If you notice any of the following, contact your GP:

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| - Ulcer | - Ingrown nail | - Corn |
| - Unusual swelling | - Bruising or cuts. | - Foot shape changes |
| - Redness | - Broken skin between toes | - Cracked skin |
| - Blisters | - Callus | - Nail colour changes. |