

Control your diabetes. *For Life.*

Circular 569 J

Healthy Feet

- People with diabetes are prone to foot problems.
- Amputations due to diabetes can be prevented.
- A podiatrist is a doctor who specializes in treating foot problems.
- Neglecting a foot sore or injury can quickly turn into a serious infection.
- Daily foot care is important for people who have diabetes.
- Smoking and alcohol use can cause circulation and nerve damage to feet.

People with diabetes are prone to foot problems that can lead to amputations. An amputation can end a career, limit your freedom and ability to move around, and decrease your quality of life. Controlling diabetes, practicing good daily foot care, and visiting your podiatrist can prevent amputations. A **podiatrist** is a doctor who specializes in treating foot problems, especially related to diabetes.

Common foot problems are caused by sores or injuries from poor-fitting shoes, irritation from the seam of a sock, a stubbed toe, ingrown toenail, or irritation from a pebble in your shoe that you cannot feel. Any sore or injury to your foot, if neglected, can quickly turn into a serious infection and result in amputation. If you have diabetes, take action to protect and care for your feet.

Wear Comfortable Shoes That Fit Well

Consult an experienced shoe fitter when you buy new shoes. Shoes should fit comfortably when you try them on, and you should have plenty of room to freely move your toes. Don't buy shoes that are tight or pinch, or have high heels or pointed toes that can cause pressure points. The best shoes for daily footwear are cushioned like running or walking shoes. Break in new shoes for short periods to avoid irritation. Sandals or other shoes with open toes or heels can expose your feet to injury. Never go barefoot, even in your own home and especially outdoors.



Wash and Check Your Feet Every Day

Always test water temperature with your elbow first before stepping into a hot bath. People with diabetes often lose the ability to feel temperature with their feet and may suffer dangerous burns from putting feet into water that is too hot. Dry feet gently before putting on shoes and socks. Check your feet for red areas, cuts, bruises, sores, or other changes. Use a mirror to see the bottoms of your feet. Use a cream or moisturizer on dry, rough areas. Do not put moisturizer between your toes. Socks should be clean, soft, and without seams that can cause irritation. Shake out and check the inside of shoes for anything that might rub or injure feet before putting them on.



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Never Try to Remove Calluses, Corns, Warts, or Ingrown Toenails

Always see your health care provider or podiatrist for help with these problems. You can easily injure yourself by using razors or scissors on feet or toes. Always cut toenails straight across and use an emery board to round sharp corners. Never use scissors to cut corners or dig out ingrown nails. Do not use corn or wart removal preparations that can burn skin.

Stop Smoking and Drinking Alcoholic Beverages

Smoking can cause circulation problems in the feet, making it difficult for healing to take place. Drinking alcoholic beverages can cause damage to nerves in the legs and feet. Damaged nerves result in loss of sensation, making it difficult to feel pain or injuries.

See your health care provider if you notice:

- changes in the color or temperature of your feet
- any unusual pain in your feet or legs
- any open sores or cracks in the skin—especially ones that do not heal
- ingrown toenails
- corns or calluses that bleed under the skin

Where to Go for More Information

■ Your health care provider

■ American Diabetes Association:
1-800-DIABETES

■ National Diabetes Education Program:
1-800-438-5383 or visit the World Wide Web at **ndep.nih.gov** or **www.cdc.gov**

■ Your county Extension office

This publication was made possible by grants from New Mexico State University's Cooperative Extension Service and the New Mexico Department of Health Diabetes Control Program.

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**Reprinted
April 2003**

Las Cruces, NM
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This Publication is scheduled to be updated and reissued Dec. 2005.