FOOT COMPLICATIONS AND DIABETES

Diabetes can cause nerve damage and blood flow problems in the legs and feet. As a result, people with diabetes are at a higher risk for developing complications from minor injuries such as blisters or cuts. Nerve damage reduces sensation, making it difficult to feel when an injury has occurred. Poor blood flow makes it difficult for the body to heal small cuts or wounds. These impairments in combination can cause a small injury to become a serious problem.

REGULAR FOOT EXAMS

It is important to see a foot care professional for regular foot exams. Regular screening and examination assists with early detection of problems and allows for the appropriate referrals to be made. During these exams, your foot care professional will assess nerve function, blood flow, joint ranges of motion, muscular strength and overall physical state of your feet. Your foot care professional will be able to notice changes in your feet over time and make recommendations for optimizing your foot health.

Sensation testing locations commonly tested with a 10g monofilament during regular diabetic foot exams.

For more information and for additional resources, please visit the Canadian Diabetes Association at:

www.diabetes.ca

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

- Performance footwear
- Custom made foot orthotics
- Over-the-counter orthotics
- Footwear modifications
- Compression stockings
- Bracing, splints, non-custom AFO's
- 3D GAiT analysis (running specific)

Visit solescience.ca/injury-locator for more information about how we can help you get back on your feet.

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DIABETES FROM THE GROUND UP

Foot care

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DAILY FOOT CARE TIPS

Developing a daily foot care routine is one of the best ways to prevent foot complications. The following 5 point checklist will help you get started:

1. **Thoroughly wash and dry your feet everyday.** Use warm water and mild soap. Dry feet thoroughly, especially between the toes.

2. **Inspect both feet – top and bottom!** Look for any changes to the skin; redness, cracks, blisters, cuts, bruises or other changes. Use a small mirror to see the bottom of your feet, or ask someone to check them for you.

3. **Inspect and maintain your toenails.** Check daily for any cracks, ingrown nails or other changes. Keep toenails trimmed straight across and file any sharp edges. Don't trim nails too short.

4. **Moisturize soles and heels.** Apply lotion to the soles and the heels of your feet. Avoid putting lotion between the toes, as excessive moisture can cause fungus and other infections.

5. **Always wear clean socks and well-fitting footwear.** Whenever possible, wear light coloured socks. If you have a cut or blister, the drainage will be more noticeable on the light coloured fabric. Avoid socks with a tight elastic or thick seams. Always check the insides of your shoes for pebbles or other objects.

ALWAYS

- Wear well fitting footwear. They should be supportive, have low heels and be wide enough to accommodate your foot. Shoes should not rub or pinch any areas of your feet. Ideally, footwear should be lined with a soft, seamless interior.
- See a professional for corn, wart or callus removal.
- Wear shoes, or slippers whenever possible. The added protection helps to prevent minor foot injuries.
- Wear socks to bed if your feet are cold.
- Exercise regularly to maintain good circulation. Simple exercises such as seated calf raises and ankle rotations can improve circulation.
- Elevate your feet and legs when sitting. This helps to encourage blood flow back to the heart and eases the pressure on the veins in the lower legs.
- See your Pedorthist for advice on the right off-loading insoles for your shoes.

NEW SHOES? CHECK FOR

Appropriate internal volume/depth

Skin irritation with new footwear

No seams or internal stitching

Appropriate width

AVOID

- Wearing footwear that is worn out, too tight, stretched out or otherwise ill-fitting. Poorly fitted footwear can cause pressure and friction which can lead to a blister or cut.
- Using over-the-counter medications for corns and warts. These can be dangerous for people with diabetes.
- Going barefoot, even indoors. Consider buying a well-fitting shoe specifically for indoors, or use a supportive slipper.
- Using heating pads or hot water bottles. Even minor nerve damage can impair the ability to sense when a heating pad is too hot and can lead to burns.
- Smoking. Smoking decreases circulation and impairs wound healing. Smoking is a significant risk factor in amputation for people with diabetes.
- Sitting with your legs or ankles crossed for a long period of time.
- Wearing over-the-counter insoles in your footwear. These devices can cause blisters if they are not right for your feet.

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