



East Staffordshire And Surrounds
Diabetes UK Patient Network

Good Footcare

For People Who Have Diabetes

Produced by the East Staffordshire and
Surrounds Diabetes UK Patient Network



Introduction

The aim of this information booklet is to give people who have diabetes information on what they should be doing to look after their feet and where information can be found on the topic.

The information has been produced by the East Staffordshire and Surrounds Diabetes UK Patient Network, ESSDUKPN.

ESSDUKPN is the local Diabetes Support Group for East Staffordshire and the surrounding area. This support group has members that have both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes and is based in the Burton-on-Trent area.

It should be pointed out from the outset that the information within this booklet is only meant as a guide. If a person is concerned with the condition of their feet, they should contact their appropriate medical professional, as soon as possible, to discuss their concerns.



Why is Good Footcare Important?

With diabetes, it means you're much more likely to develop problems with your feet – problems that could end up as amputations if you do not control your diabetes. For instance, high sugar levels can damage the nerves in the feet causing a condition called peripheral neuropathy. Nerve damage combined with poor circulation can slow healing and increase the chances of infection.

A person who has damaged nerves may lose the sense of feeling in his or her feet. Examples of this include:

- ▶ not noticing that an ill-fitting shoe has created a blister.
- ▶ not noticing a small cut when walking barefoot.
- ✖ When diabetic foot conditions are left untreated, they can result in limb- threatening conditions.

Naturally, the degree/risk of foot infection will be dependent on the length of time a person has had diabetes. For instance, an 18year old who has recently been diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes is at a low risk of infection/ulceration, whereas someone who has had diabetes for some time may have an increased risk, especially if they haven't been looking after the condition of their feet. At the end of this booklet, under useful websites, are details on where to find the NHS England approved and locally used low, moderate and high-risk leaflets. Regardless of the risk score, (low, moderate or high), it is important that a person with diabetes knows that there is no "one size fits all." The most important aspect is that they attend their diabetes reviews so that the condition of their feet can be monitored, as things may well change over the years.

Bearing the above in mind, the following information has been put together by patients and professionals to help assist people to practise good footcare, and to indicate where information to enable this can be found.

Your feet are important, especially if you have diabetes.

With diabetes, it means you're much more likely to develop problems with your feet – problems that could end up as amputations. But most (up to 80%) amputations can be prevented. If you take good care of your feet, and check them regularly, you can reduce your risk of developing foot problems.

Tips for everyday foot care

Look at your feet every day

Whether it's when you're putting your socks on or just before bed, check your feet every day. If you see any colour changes, swelling, cuts or bruises, build-up of hard skin, or anything unusual, or feel any pain, tell the healthcare professional who manages your diabetes. If you struggle to lift your feet up, then you might want to use a mirror to see the soles of your feet. If this is too hard, or if your eyesight is not as good as it was, try to get someone else to check your feet for you. And if you need help but live alone, it's good to speak to the healthcare professional who helps you manage your diabetes and foot care.

If you lose feeling in your feet be extra careful. Being at high risk of foot problems or losing feeling in your feet means you might not realise when you've hurt yourself. Try not to go barefoot, especially on hot sand, or gravel, and don't sit too close to radiators or heaters.

Watch out cutting your nails.

If your body can't heal itself properly, then any kind of wound can increase the chances of a serious foot problem, therefore cut your nails carefully. Don't cut down the side of your nails to avoid ingrowing toenails.

NB. People, who are at high risk, should not cut their own nails but have them done by a qualified professional. In addition, people who have developed reduced sensation or reduced blood flow may be advised not to cut their own toenails, as there is always a risk of skin damage. Ask about what is the best option for you when you have your yearly foot check.

If your healthcare professional is happy for you to cut your toenails:

- ▶ cut them often but not too short or down the side.
- ▶ trim them with nail clippers and then use an emery board to file any corners.
- ▶ clean them gently with a nail brush - don't use the sharp points of scissors to clean - this isn't safe.
- ▶ If you are unsure whether you should or shouldn't cut your nails, or do not feel confident to do so, then a safer option would be to regularly (i.e., weekly) file your nails or get a family member to do them for you.



- Washing daily is also a simple way to keep your feet and toenails clean and away from infection. Just a simple solution of soap and warm water will do, but always check the temperature before you put your feet in. Be careful not to soak your feet as this just makes the skin soggy and more likely to get damaged.
- If you've lost some sensation in your feet or you're worried about things like ingrowing toenails, see a foot specialist. They are used to helping with these things.

Use moisturising cream every day

Using emollient cream will keep your skin healthy. It's best to talk to your healthcare team about which emollient cream is right for you. Don't put cream between your toes, as this can cause problems. The same for talcum powder - if it gets clogged up between your toes, it could also cause excessive dryness.

Don't use corn-removing plasters or blades

These can damage your skin and cause more problems for your feet. If you have hard skin or corns, a healthcare professional should deal with them. These normally carry a warning not to use if you suffer from diabetes.

Make sure your socks and shoes fit

Blisters can be dangerous for people with diabetes. If your shoes are too tight, too loose or rub you, then don't wear them... even if they look great. Footwear should protect and not damage your feet.

Take control of your diabetes

Easier said than done. But lowering high amounts of sugar in your blood will help prevent nerve damage and can stop things getting worse. Ask your diabetes team about the different ways they can help.

Ask for help to stop smoking

Smoking makes it harder for blood to travel around your body (like to your feet) which puts you at even greater risk of amputation. Your healthcare team can make it easier to quit.

Keep active

This will help you manage your diabetes and reduce your risk of serious foot complications. If you're worried about what activity to choose, speak to your healthcare team.

Go for your foot check

If you're over 12 years old, a trained professional should inspect your bare feet once a year. This will spot if you are at risk of any foot problems.



NHS Footcare Videos available on YouTube

The following footcare videos can be found by going onto the following YouTube links:



Footcare for people with Diabetes

How to look after your feet

<https://youtu.be/sX9Faxnvuhg>



Footcare for people with Diabetes

What happens if you develop a Diabetic Foot Problem?

<https://youtu.be/sGnjxc18BC4>



Footcare for people with Diabetes

Your Annual Foot Check

https://youtu.be/6WLO9_mKcac

Footwear

Whether someone has been recently diagnosed with diabetes or has been managing it for years, preventive health is crucial to reduce the long-term complications of diabetes. One of the complications is nerve damage which can lead to long-term complications. Poorly controlled blood sugar can damage many parts of the body, including the nerves and blood vessels that go to the feet. Because of this, **people with diabetes** have an increased risk of developing foot problems. This nerve damage is called neuropathy and can, in severe situations, lead to amputation. It also reduces the ability to sense pain on the feet that can result from a variety of conditions including cuts, corns, bunions, infections etc. It is therefore not only important to check your feet daily, but also to wear the correct footwear.

What to consider when choosing a new pair of shoes

They should relieve pressure on the feet

Shoes should be comfortable and cushioned to help take pressure off the soles of your feet and reduce the risk of getting blisters and ulcers. To make an existing pair of shoes more comfortable, and if there is enough space in your shoes, wear padded socks, add in a lift, or buy cushioned insoles, if there is enough space in your shoes. Also, look for shoes that have laces that you can loosen or tighten. This is essential to accommodate any swelling or foot changes that occur. A podiatrist can help determine what you need.

They should protect the entire foot

People with diabetes should avoid going barefoot or wearing flip-flops or flimsy sandals, since this leaves your feet open to injuries and infections. Leave a pair of comfortable shoes by your bed so that you can easily slip into them in the middle of the night. Try to find a lightweight shoe that will help your feet move easily. Choose a flexible material, like canvas, leather or suede. Be sure the shoe has a solid back that fits snugly around the heel to provide extra support.



They should be the appropriate size

If diabetes has affected the feeling in your feet, shoes may feel comfortable even though they don't fit well. This is a problem when you're choosing new footwear. Have your feet regularly measured, even if you think they have not changed. Shoes that are too small or too big can cause rubbing and lead to painful blisters and sores. Since our feet tend to swell a little bit by the afternoon, it is best to be measured and buy shoes later in the day. That way, it accommodates the natural swelling and reduces the pressure of a shoe that is too tight. Always try on shoes with the same socks that you plan to wear with them. Wearing thinner socks could cause you to buy shoes that are not the right size. Pay special attention to how the shoes make your instep and ball of the foot feel - there should be plenty of room for them to move. It is also important to allow at least ½ inch of room between your toes and the upper part of the shoe. As you get older, your feet might get bigger due to weight gain, loose ligaments, or physical changes like bunions. This doesn't mean your actual bones are growing. Instead, your feet get flatter and wider over time. Therefore, it is important to have your feet measured; doing so will show up any size and width differences.

They should be suitable to wear for hours at a time

Test new shoes at home first; wear them for a few hours and carefully assess the way your feet look and feel. If you are heading out for the entire day, take a comfortable backup pair so that you can switch your shoes after a few hours, allowing your feet to breathe.



Types of Shoes to Avoid



Shoes with pointed toes

While they may look cute, they tend to restrict the toes and reduce circulation.



Shoes WITHOUT arch support

The lack of an arch support can increase risk of tissue breakdown on the foot.



Old shoes you already have that do not fit properly

Donate them to your charity of choice to give them a new home, but it is wise not to wear them as they could cause injury.



Heels especially anything more than 2 inches

Even without diabetes wearing heels provides minimal support, as they put extra pressure on the forefoot.

Shoes that are not comfortable

In the past, we would always accept that new shoes need time to be “broken in”. Honestly, the best shoes are those that feel great straight out of the box. So, if you are not “feeling it”, put them back. However, if a person has neuropathy, they will not have these sensations. While there are many types of shoes available in stores, ask a sales assistant about shoes that are both therapeutic **and** stylish. Your doctor may recommend certain types to accommodate your needs. For example, if someone has hammer-toes, calluses or other foot changes, in-depth shoes may be helpful. These types of shoes are up to ½ inch deeper than normal shoes, and that extra room can accommodate foot changes and allow for inserts or orthotics.

Healing or post-op shoes

Are typically used when someone needs to stay away from regular shoes to allow foot sores, wounds or ulcers to heal, or after foot surgery. Although it is possible to find therapeutic shoes in the open-toe style, it’s best to avoid these options.

Consider **custom shoes, made using a mould of your foot**, if you have a foot deformity or other special foot concerns. They are specially designed to keep the foot healthy when someone has neuropathy or more complex foot issues, like Charcot foot. A podiatrist can help determine what is right for you, so talk to them about your shoe needs.

Diabetes Feet on Holiday

Information from:

<https://www.sirona-cic.org.uk/advice-information/leaflet-library/leaflet-diabetes-feet-on-holiday/>

Checklist

- Long journeys on trains, buses and planes can make your feet swell.
- Walk up and down the aisle every half hour – the exercise will help to keep the swelling down.
- Make sure that your shoes don’t become too tight – take a pair of loose sandals for the journey.
- If you normally wear hospital shoes, then wear them on holiday too. Remember that changing over to ordinary shoes could cause an ulcer – and ruin your holiday.
- Avoid walking barefoot, especially over hot sand and concrete.
- On the beach, and in the sea, wear plastic sandals.
- Avoid sunburn to your feet and legs. Use a high factor sunscreen or keep covered.
- Don’t forget the soles of your feet.
- If your skin gets very dry in the hot weather, you may need to apply more moisturising cream than usual. Pay special attention to your heels, dry skin will easily cause cracks. If your feet become moist, dab the affected areas with a little surgical spirit on cotton wool. Do not use on broken skin.
- Take a small supply of sterile dressings, and medical adhesive tape like micropore on holiday. Clean any small blisters, cuts or grazes with diluted salt water and tape on a dry dressing.
- Examine your feet daily for sores, swelling or colour changes. If any of these problems develop, then visit the local HCPC Registered Podiatrist/ Chiropodist or local emergency department doctor. Remember, delays in seeking treatment make foot problems worse. Seek early treatment for all holiday foot problems via the local GP.



Diabetes and Foot Complications

The following website will take you to information regarding foot complications.

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/complications/feet>

On here you will be able to access information, videos and podcasts on the following:

- Signs of a foot problem.
- Look out for the signs of a serious foot problem.
- How to look after your feet.
- Signs of a foot problem.
- Tips and advice on looking after your feet every day.
- **Your annual foot check.** Find out what will happen at your annual foot check.
- **Touch the toes test.** Simple test for you to check sensation in your feet.
- **Foot care podcast** Ask A Diabetes Expert Podcast | 15 mins. On the website above.
- **Charcot foot.** Charcot foot is a complication that can happen with diabetes. Find out more about it by going onto the website above.





The COLLEGE of PODIATRY

The College of Podiatry

<https://cop.org.uk/patient-information/diabetes>

Diabetic foot webinar for people with diabetes
On Friday 13 November 2020, a patient-facing webinar, entitled Living with diabetes: How to avoid foot complications and stay healthy, was co-created by multiple partners with an interest in the diabetic foot. The webinar addressed the importance of foot screening and risk stratification, the patient perspective and footcare provision during the pandemic. A recording of the webinar is available by going onto the above website.

Further information and useful contacts

In addition, by going onto the above website you will be able to download their diabetes information and advice leaflets on:

- Low risk of non-healing wounds and amputation.
- Moderate risk of non-healing wounds and amputation.
- Looking after your diabetic foot ulcer to reduce the risk of amputation.
- Advice for looking after your Charcot foot to reduce the risk of amputation.
- Looking after your foot in remission, to reduce the risk of further ulcers and amputation.
- Footwear advice to reduce the risk of amputation
- Advice to help you care for your feet on holiday

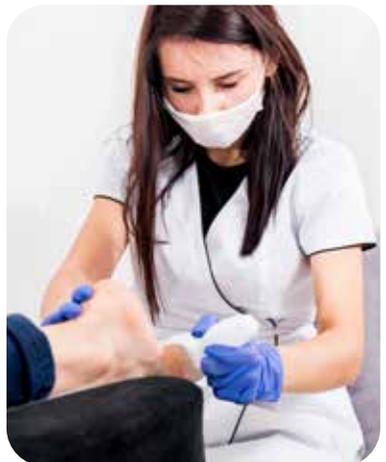
Latest information can be found on

<https://cop.org.uk/patient-information/diabetes/diabetes-leaflets>

Further information and useful contacts

For more detailed and comprehensive information about Diabetes and foot care generally, please consult the websites below:

- www.footindiabetes.org
- www.diabetes.org.uk
- www.patient.co.uk





Useful Websites

Diabetes UK Central Office

Wells Lawrence House, 126 Back Church Lane,
London E1 1FH

Tel: 0345 123 2399

Fax: 020 7424 1001

Email: info@diabetes.org.uk

Website: <https://www.diabetes.org.uk>

Diabetes UK, Midlands

Suite 2C, St David's Court, Union Street,
Wolverhampton, WV1 3JE

Tel: 01902 916444

Email: midlands@diabetes.org.uk

Diabetes UK

Call: 0345 123 2399,

Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm

Website: https://www.diabetes.org.uk/how_we_help/helpline

East Staffordshire and Surrounds Diabetes UK Patient Network

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Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Trust Headquarters, St. George's Hospital,
Corporation Street, Stafford, Staffordshire,
ST16 3SR

Tel: 0300 7907000

Website: <http://www.mpft.nhs.uk/>

University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust Diabetes Centre,

Queens Hospital, Burton

Tel: 01283 593113

Website: <https://www.uhdb.nhs.uk/>

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Notes

My Details

Surgery/Hospital - Contact Name

Surgery/Hospital - Contact Number

Podiatrist - Contact Name

Podiatrist - Contact Number



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