

# Foot Care

## How can diabetes hurt my feet?

High blood sugars from diabetes can cause two problems that can hurt your feet:

1. **Nerve damage.** One problem is damage to nerves in your legs and feet. With damaged nerves, you might not feel pain, heat, or cold in your legs and feet. A sore or cut on your foot may get worse because you do not know it is there. This lack of feeling is caused by nerve damage, also called diabetic neuropathy. Nerve damage can lead to a sore or an infection.
2. **Poor blood flow.** The second problem happens when not enough blood flows to your legs and feet. Poor blood flow makes it hard for a sore or infection to heal. This problem is called peripheral vascular disease, also called PVD. Smoking when you have diabetes makes blood flow problems much worse.

These two problems can work together to cause a foot problem. For example, if you get a blister from shoes that do not fit, you might not feel the pain from the blister because you have nerve damage in your foot. Next, the blister can get infected. If blood sugar is high, the extra sugar feeds the germs. Germs can grow and the infection can get worse. Poor blood flow to your legs and feet can slow down healing.



towfiqu barbhuiya (photographer). Foot Pain [Digital image]. Retrieved from [www.canva.com/media/MAEM7Abv9rY](https://www.canva.com/media/MAEM7Abv9rY)

Once in a while a bad infection has difficulty healing. The infection might cause gangrene. If a person has gangrene, the skin and tissue around the sore die. The area becomes black and smelly. To keep gangrene from spreading, a healthcare provider may have to do surgery to cut off a toe, foot, or part of a leg. Cutting off a body part is called an amputation.

## How can I take care of my feet?

- ◆ Wash your feet in warm water every day. Make sure the water is not too hot by testing the temperature with your elbow. Dry your feet well, especially between your toes.
- ◆ Look at your feet every day to check for cuts, sores, blisters, redness, calluses, or other problems. Checking every day is even important if you have nerve damage or poor blood flow. If you cannot bend over or pull your feet up to check them, use a mirror. If you cannot see your feet well, ask someone else to check your feet.
- ◆ If your skin is dry, rub lotion on your feet after you wash and dry them. Do not put lotion between your toes.
- ◆ File corns and calluses gently with an emery board or pumice stone. Do this after your bath or shower.
- ◆ Cut your toenails once a week or when needed. Cut toe-nails when they are soft from washing. Cut them to the shape of the toe and not too short. File the edges with an emery board.
- ◆ Always wear slippers or shoes to protect your feet from injuries.
- ◆ Always wear socks or stockings to avoid blisters. Do not wear socks or knee-high stockings that are too tight below your knee.
- ◆ Wear supportive shoes that fit well. Shop for shoes at the end of the day when your feet are bigger. Break in shoes slowly. Wear them 1 to 2 hours each day for the first few weeks.
- ◆ Before putting your shoes on, feel the insides with your hands to make sure they have no sharp edges or objects that might injure your feet.
- ◆ Keep the blood flowing to your feet by wiggling your toes and moving your ankles up and down for five minutes, two or three times a day.



Stephanie Allen (photographer). Foot Spa [Digital image]. Retrieved from [//www.pexels.com/photo/person-having-a-foot-spa-4085445/](https://www.pexels.com/photo/person-having-a-foot-spa-4085445/)

## How can my healthcare team help?

- ◆ Foot infections can work their way into the bone without you feeling it. If you have signs of infection like warm and red skin, or fluid or pus draining out of a foot sore, call your primary care team right away. If you cannot see your primary care team within 1 or 2 days, go to an urgent care or emergency facility.
- ◆ Your healthcare provider should do a complete foot exam at least once per year.
- ◆ To make sure your healthcare provider checks your feet, take off your shoes and socks before your healthcare provider comes into the room.
- ◆ Ask your healthcare provider to check how well the nerves in your feet sense feeling.
- ◆ Ask your healthcare provider to check how well blood is flowing to your legs and feet.
- ◆ Ask your healthcare provider to show you the best way to trim your toenails. Ask what lotion or cream to use on your legs and feet.
- ◆ If you cannot cut your toenails or you have a foot problem, ask your healthcare provider to send you to a foot healthcare provider. A healthcare provider who cares for feet is called a podiatrist.
- ◆ Special shoes can be made to fit softly around your sore feet or feet that have changed shape. These special shoes help protect your feet. Talk with your healthcare provider about how and where to get them.



RODNAE Productions (photographer). Medical People Talking.  
[Digital image]. Retrieved from //www.canva.com/media/  
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