YOU AND YOUR BODY

t·r·e·n·d™ DIABETES



LOOKING AFTER YOUR FEET WHEN YOU HAVE DIABETES

WHY IS THIS LEAFLET FOR YOU?

Diabetes can gradually damage the nerves and blood vessels supplying your feet. This happens so slowly that you may not notice that your feet are less sensitive than they used to be. Nerves let you know if skin is being rubbed, cut or is infected. If your nerves are damaged, you lose the early warning signs that protect your feet. If the blood vessels are damaged, the blood supply to the skin is reduced so it takes longer to heal damaged areas. Damage to nerves and blood vessels is more likely to happen if you:

- are a smoker
- have had diabetes for a long time
- have had poorly controlled glucose levels for a long time
- have kidney damage

As your feet are less able to let you know when something is damaging them, it is important to look after them. This leaflet gives you some advice on how to do that.

PREVENTING DIABETES FOOT COMPLICATIONS

Sadly, diabetes is the number one cause of amputations in the UK. The good news is that most of these could be prevented. Looking after your feet carefully, working with your doctor or nurse to keep control of your diabetes, and treating problems quickly can reduce your risk.

How do you know if you have damage to nerves and/or blood vessels?

Signs and symptoms of nerve damage	Signs and symptoms of blood vessel damage
• You get tingling, and pins and needles in your feet • You have burning pain in your feet, particularly at night • The shape of your feet have changed • If you cut your foot or stub your toe, you may not feel it	• Cramps in your legs, even when resting • Your feet are cold and look pale • You have wounds that are slow to heal • The skin on your feet and lower legs has become shiny and smooth with loss of hair

What can you do to reduce your risk?

Ensure you attend your annual diabetes review with your doctor or nurse. They should examine both of your bare feet. They will check your heels for cracks, in between toes for fungal infections, note the presence of corns, hard skin, changes in shape and colour, and will look at your footwear to make sure they protect your feet properly. An assessment of nerve and blood vessel function should be made using a tuning fork or monofilament to check for numb areas, and by feeling the pulses in your feet and ankles to check the blood supply.

They will refer you to a state registered podiatrist or foot protection team if you have an increased risk of problems with your feet.

If you smoke, ask your doctor or nurse for support to stop. Smoking damages blood vessels.

Work with your doctor and nurse to keep your glucose levels and blood pressure in target.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR FEET

Examine your feet every day: If you have nerve damage, you may have lost the early warning signs of problems with your feet. Problems include blisters, breaks in the skin, colour changes and swelling. If you are unable to do this yourself, ask your partner or carer to do this for you.

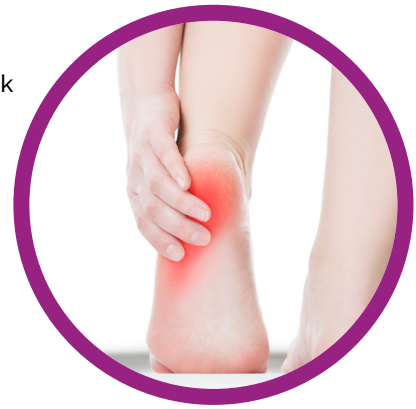
Protect your feet:

- ✔ Before putting your shoes on, check the soles and insides of them in case sharp objects have pierced or fallen inside them.
- ✔ Break new shoes in gradually to avoid developing blisters.
- ✔ Wash your feet daily to keep skin healthy. Dry carefully between your toes to reduce risk of fungal infections. Do not soak your feet.
- ✔ If your skin feels dry, apply a foot cream which contains 10% urea. This is available on prescription from your doctor.
- ✔ If your toenails need trimming and you are able to do this yourself, it is safer to use a nail file. Follow the curve of the nail so you do not leave sharp edges which could cut into the next toe. A family member may be able to help you do this.
- ✖ Avoid walking barefoot, especially on hot tiles or sand.
- ✖ Do not put your feet on hot-water bottles or "toast" them in front of the fire or radiator. You may burn your skin without feeling anything.
- ✖ Do not treat corns, verrucas and hard skin yourself. Over-the-counter treatments can damage the skin and if you have nerve damage, you may not feel this happening.



IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THESE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS, SEEK URGENT MEDICAL ADVICE:

- Your foot is red, swollen, and feels hot
- An area on your foot becomes blue or black
- Your foot becomes painful
- You have a discharge from a break in the skin
- You notice a change in your foot and feel unwell
- If you have a foot injury such as standing on a drawing pin



USEFUL RESOURCES:

Trend Diabetes: www.trenddiabetes.online

Diabetes UK: www.diabetes.org.uk

Contact number for your NHS podiatrist:

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