

Preventing Diabetic Foot Infections

If you have diabetes, you can develop sores or wounds on your feet. These sores are called ulcers. If a foot ulcer does not heal, it could get infected. However, if you watch your diabetes carefully and take good care of your feet, you can usually prevent infection. Here are some tips to help you avoid an infection.

DO:

- Do inspect your feet daily. Look for redness, pain, blisters, cuts, scratches, or other sores. If you can't see your feet, use a mirror or ask a family member or caretaker for help.
- Do wear comfortable shoes. Make sure to check the inside of your shoes and feel around for anything that could rub against your feet.
- Do wash your feet regularly. Dry them carefully, especially between the toes.
- Do use lubricants (LOO-brih-cantz) or moisturizers (MOYS-chur-eyes-urz) to keep your skin from getting dry or cracking. These also prevent calluses from forming.
- Do cut your nails straight across, and avoid cutting into the corners of the nails. If the edge of your nail is sharp, file it down to make it smooth. If you can't feel your toes, don't cut your own nails. A special foot doctor called a podiatrist (poh-DYE-uh-trist) should check your nails regularly.

- Do avoid extremely hot or cold temperatures. Always test the temperature of the water before you take a bath or shower.
- Do visit your doctor or a podiatrist right away if you find anything wrong with your feet.

DON'T:

- Don't walk barefoot indoors or outdoors, or use adhesive tape on your feet.
- Don't treat calluses or corns by yourself, and don't treat them with a sharp instrument or chemicals.
- Don't use hot water bottles or other devices that warm your feet.
- Don't wear tight stockings. Avoid wearing socks with elastic tops, because they can reduce blood flow to your feet. Don't wear garters or hosiery that has seams. If seams are present, wear them on the outside so they don't rub against your feet. Change your stockings daily.

Where can I find more information?

Your doctor

American Diabetes Association
Website: www.diabetes.org

American Podiatric Medical Association
Website: www.apma.org

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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