



Focus On Your Feet

A Guide for People With Diabetes



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You can easily take care of your feet.

Do you want to avoid serious foot problems that can lead to a toe, foot, or leg amputation?

We can help.

Foot care is very important for every person with diabetes, but especially if you already have:

- Loss of feeling in your feet
- Changes in the shape of your feet
- Foot ulcers or sores that do not heal

About 60% of people with diabetes have some sort of nerve damage due to diabetes. Nerve damage can cause you to lose feeling in your feet. You may not feel a pebble inside your sock that is causing a sore. You may not feel a blister caused by poorly fitting shoes. Foot injuries such as these can cause ulcers, which may lead to amputation.

In fact, there are 75,000 amputations every year in the U.S. among people with diabetes. And most of them could be prevented through proper foot care.

Keeping your blood glucose (sugar) in good control and taking care of your feet every day can help you avoid serious foot problems.

Use this guide to make your own plan for taking care of your feet.

1 Take care of your diabetes.

Make healthy lifestyle choices to help keep your blood glucose (sugar), blood pressure, and cholesterol levels close to normal. Doing so may help prevent or delay diabetes-related foot problems as well as heart, eye, and kidney disease.

Work with your health care provider to make a diabetes plan that fits your lifestyle. The team may include your doctor, a diabetes educator, a nurse, a dietitian, a foot care doctor called a podiatrist, and other specialists. This team will help you to:

- Know when to get your diabetes ABCs checked: A1C*, Blood pressure, and Cholesterol.
- Know how and when to test your blood glucose.
- Take your medicines as prescribed.
- Eat regular meals that contain a variety of healthy, low-fat, high-fiber foods including fruits and vegetables each day.
- Get physical activity each day.
- Stop smoking.
- Follow your foot care plan.
- Keep all your appointments and have your feet, eyes, and kidneys checked at least once a year.
- Visit your dentist twice a year.

*A1C is an average measure of your blood glucose over a 3-month period.

2 Check your feet every day.

You may have serious foot problems, but feel no pain. That's why it's very important to visually inspect your feet. Check your feet for cuts, sores, red spots, swelling, and infected toenails. Find a time (evening is best) to check your feet each day.

If you have trouble bending over to see your feet, use a plastic mirror to help. You can also ask a family member or caregiver to assist you.

Be sure to call your doctor right away if a cut, blister, or bruise on your foot does not begin to heal after one day.



Redness or Inflammation

Any areas that appear to be red, swollen, or feel "hot" to the touch are potential problem signs.



Ulcer or Sore

At the first sign of an ulcer or any type of open wound, call your healthcare professional immediately.



Cut or Blister

Be sure to check your heels for any potential problems including cuts, blisters, severe cracks or redness.



Toe Irritation

Look at the tops of your feet and in between your toes for any irritation, such as an ingrown toenail.

3 Wash your feet every day.

- Wash your feet in warm, not hot, water with soap. Do not soak your feet because your skin will get dry afterwards.
- Before bathing or showering, test the water to make sure it is not too hot. You can use a thermometer (90° to 95° F is safe) or your elbow.
- Dry your feet well. Be sure to dry between your toes. Use talcum powder or cornstarch to keep the skin between your toes dry.

4 Keep the skin soft and smooth.

- Rub a thin coat of skin lotion, cream, or petroleum jelly on the tops and bottoms of your feet. This will help rehydrate and soothe dry, cracked, red skin.
- Do not put lotion or cream between your toes because this might cause an infection.

Put lotion on the tops and bottoms of your feet.



5 Smooth corns and calluses gently.

- If you have corns and calluses, check with your doctor or podiatrist about the best way to care for them.
- If your doctor tells you to, use a pumice stone to smooth corns and calluses after bathing or showering. A pumice stone is a type of rock used to smooth the skin. Rub gently, only in one direction, to avoid tearing the skin.
- Do not cut corns and calluses. Don't use razor blades or corn plasters — they can damage your skin.
- Heel cream can be used to eliminate calluses, and will also soften and smooth any cracks or calluses you may have on your heels.

6 Trim your toenails each week or when needed.

- Have a foot care doctor trim your toenails if you can't see well, if you cannot reach your feet, if your toenails are thick or yellowed, or if your nails curve and grow into the skin.
- If you can see and reach your toenails, trim them with clippers after you wash and dry your feet.
- Trim toenails straight across and smooth them with an emery board or nail file.
- Do not cut into the corners of the toenail.

7 Wear shoes and socks at all times.

- Wear shoes and socks at all times. Do not walk barefoot – not even indoors – because it is easy to step on something and hurt your feet.
- Always wear socks, stockings, or nylons with your shoes to help avoid blisters and sores.
- Choose socks that are specifically designed for people with diabetes. Key features to look for in a sock are seamless, constriction-free design and use of a material that wicks away moisture to control bacteria growth and minimize infection.
- Check the insides of your shoes before you put them on to be sure the lining is smooth and that there are no objects in them.
- Wear shoes that fit well and protect your feet.

8 Protect your feet from hot and cold.

- Wear shoes at the beach or on hot pavement.
- Put sunscreen on the top of your feet to prevent sunburn.
- Keep your feet away from radiators and open fires.
- Do not put hot water bottles or heating pads on your feet.
- Wear socks at night if your feet get cold. Lined boots are a good choice in winter to keep your feet warm.
- Check your feet often in cold weather to avoid frostbite.

9 Keep the blood flowing to your feet.

- Put your feet up when you are sitting.
- Wiggle your toes for 5 minutes, two or three times a day. Move your ankles up and down and in and out to improve blood flow in your feet and legs.
- Do not cross your legs for long periods of time.
- Do not wear tight socks, elastic or rubber bands, or garters around your legs.
- Do not smoke. Smoking reduces blood flow to your feet. Ask your doctor for help to stop smoking.
- Work with your health care team to control your A1C (blood glucose), blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Talk to your healthcare professional about whether compression socks are right for you.

10 Be more active.

- Ask your health care team to help you plan a daily activity program that is right for you.
- Walking, dancing, swimming, and bicycling are good forms of exercise that are easy on the feet.
- Avoid activities that are hard on the feet, such as running and jumping.
- Always include a short warm-up and cool-down period.
- Wear athletic shoes that fit well and that provide good support.

Make sure to call your health care team right away if a cut, sore, blister, or bruise on your foot does not begin to heal after one day.

11 Be sure to ask your health care provider to:

- Check your feet during every visit.
- Check the sense of feeling and pulses in your feet at least once a year.
- Show you how to care for your feet.
- Refer you to a podiatrist if needed.
- Decide if special shoes would help your feet stay healthy.

12 Get Started now.

- Set a time every day to check your feet.
- Note the date of your next visit to the doctor.
- Cut out the foot care tip sheet in this booklet and put it on your bathroom or bedroom wall or nightstand as a reminder.
- Complete the “To Do” list at the back of this booklet. Get started now.

Tips for Proper Footwear

- Proper footwear is very important for preventing serious foot problems. Athletic or walking shoes are good for daily wear. They support your feet and allow them to “breathe.”
- Never wear vinyl or plastic shoes because they don’t stretch or “breathe.”
- When buying shoes, make sure they are comfortable from the start and have enough room for your toes.
- Don’t buy shoes with pointed toes or high heels. They put too much pressure on your toes.

Ask your doctor about Medicare or other insurance coverage for special footwear.

You may need special shoes or shoe inserts to prevent serious foot problems. If you have Medicare Part B insurance, you may be able to get some of the cost of special shoes or inserts paid for. Ask your doctor whether you qualify for

- 1 pair of extra depth shoes* and 3 pairs of inserts, or
- 1 pair of custom molded shoes (including inserts) and 2 additional pairs of inserts.

If you qualify for Medicare or other insurance coverage and would benefit from the use of the shoes, your doctor or podiatrist will tell you how to get your special shoes.

* *Extra depth shoes look like athletic or walking shoes, but have more room in them. The extra room allows for different shaped feet and toes or for special inserts made to fit your feet.*

MY FOOTCARE TO DO LIST

**Make plans now to take care
of your feet for a lifetime.**

Check Each Item When Completed. Target Date:

- Print out and read the ReliOn® FootCare Guide. _____
- Get a new pair of nail clippers if my doctor recommends it. _____
- Get an emery board and a pumice stone if my doctor recommends them. _____
- Apply moisturizing lotion or cream for people with diabetes every day, but not between my toes. _____
- Buy seamless socks designed for people with diabetes. _____
- Buy a pair of shoes that fit well and cover my feet. _____
- Give away shoes that don't fit or cause any irritation. _____
- Place slippers beside my bed to wear when I get out of bed. _____
- Keep my next doctor's visit. _____
- Ask my doctor if I qualify for special shoes covered by Medicare or other insurance plans. _____
- Ask my health care team about diabetes services and supplies that are covered by Medicare or other insurance plans. _____
- Ask my doctor or nurse to inspect my feet at every visit. _____
- Plan my daily physical activity program with my health care team. _____

FOOT CARE TIPS

1 Take care of your diabetes.

- Work with your health care team to control all aspects of your diabetes: diet, exercise, medication.

2 Check your feet every day.

- Look at your bare feet every day for cuts, blisters, red spots, and swelling.

3 Wash your feet every day.

- Wash your feet in warm, not hot, water every day.
- Dry your feet well. Be sure to dry between the toes.

4 Keep the skin soft and smooth.

- Rub a thin coat of skin lotion over the tops and bottoms of your feet, but not between your toes.

5 Smooth corns and calluses gently.

- If your feet are at low risk for problems, use a pumice stone to smooth corns and calluses.
- Do not use sharp objects on corns or calluses

6 If you can see and reach your toenails, trim them each week or when needed.

- Trim your toenails straight across and file the edges with an emery board or nail file.
- If you have trouble seeing your toenails, ask a family member or health care provider for help.

7 Wear shoes and socks at all times.

- Never walk barefoot.
- Wear comfortable shoes that fit well and protect your feet.
- Always wear socks, preferably socks that are designed for people with diabetes.
- Feel inside your shoes before putting them on each time to make sure the lining is smooth and that there are no objects inside.

FOOT CARE TIPS

8 Protect your feet from hot and cold.

- Wear shoes at the beach, on hot pavement, etc.
- Wear socks if your feet get cold in bed.
- Don't test bath water with your feet
- Don't use hot water bottles or heating pads.

9 Keep the blood flowing to your feet.

- Put your feet up when sitting.
- Wiggle your toes and move your ankles up and down for 5 minutes, two or three times a day.
- Do not cross your legs for long periods of time.
- Do not smoke.

10 Be active every day.

- Plan your physical activity program with your health care team.

11 Check with your health care team.

- Have your doctor or nurse check your bare feet and find out whether you are at risk for serious foot problems. Remember that you may not feel the pain of an injury.
- Call your health care team right away if you find a cut, sore, blister, or bruise on your foot that does not begin to heal after one day.
- Follow their advice about foot care.

12 Get started now.

- Begin taking good care of your feet today.
- Set a time every day to check your feet.

For more information, please contact:

ReliOn® Diabetes Care

www.relion.com

866.321.7470

American Association of Diabetes Educators

www.aadenet.org

800-TEAM-UP-4 (800-832-6874)

American Diabetes Association

www.diabetes.org

800-DIABETES (800-342-2383)

American Podiatric Medical Association

www.apma.org

800-FOOTCARE (366-8227)

**Juvenile Diabetes Research
Foundation International**

www.jdrf.org

800-533-CURE (800-533-2873)

National Diabetes Education Program

www.ndep.nih.gov

800-438-5383

**National Institute of Diabetes and
Digestive and Kidney Diseases
National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse**

www.niddk.nih.gov

800-860-8747