

# Take Care of Your Feet for a Lifetime

## A guide for people with diabetes

Do you want to lower your chances of getting foot problems that can lead to the loss of a toe, foot, or leg?

This guide tells you how. It is all about taking care of your feet.

Even if you have had diabetes for a long time, this guide can help you learn more. Use it to help you make your own plan for taking care of your feet.

Share your plan with your doctor and health care team, and get their help when you need it.

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**NM HOSPITALS**

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# Why Is Foot Care Important?

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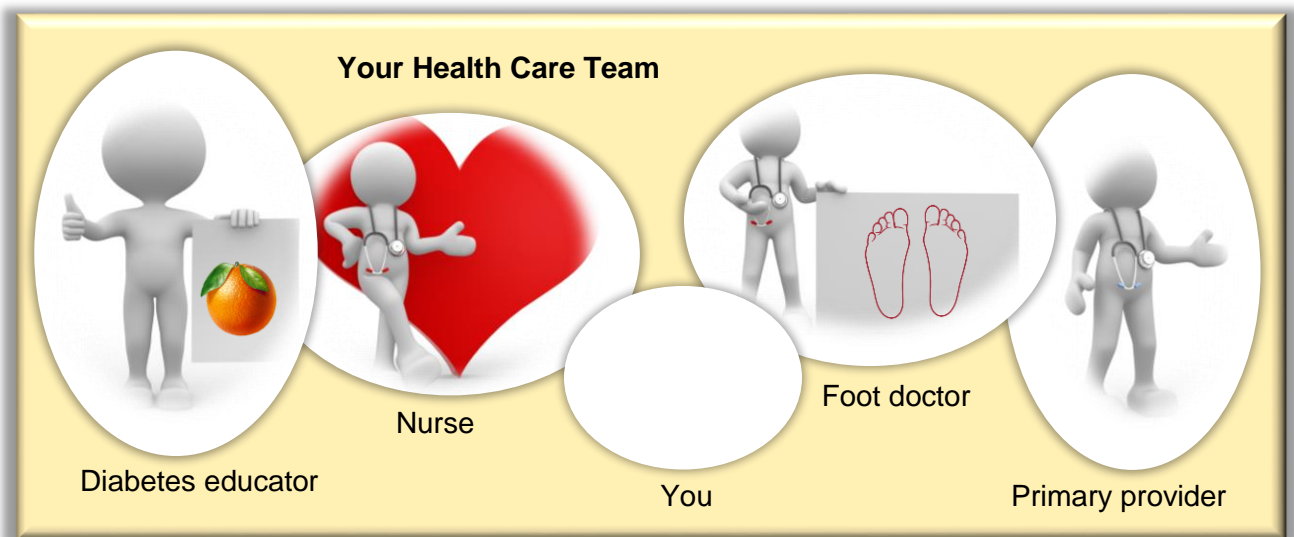
Over time, diabetes can cause you to lose feeling in your feet. When you lose feeling in your feet, you may not feel a pebble inside your sock or a blister on your foot, which can lead to cuts and sores. Diabetes also can lower the amount of blood flow in your feet. Numbness and less blood flow in the feet can lead to foot problems.

Foot care is very important for all people with diabetes, but even more so if you have:

- Pain or loss of feeling in your feet (numbness, tingling)
- Changes in the shape of your feet or toes
- Sores, cuts, or ulcers on your feet that do not heal

If you take care of your feet every day, you can lower your chances of losing a toe, foot, or leg. Managing your blood sugar can also help keep your feet healthy.

Work with your health care team to make a diabetes plan that fits your lifestyle and includes foot care. The team may include your provider, a foot doctor (podiatrist), a diabetes educator, a nurse, and other specialists who can help you manage your diabetes.



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# Check Your Feet Every Day

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- Check your bare feet for cuts, sores, blisters, red spots, swelling, and infected toenails. You may have foot problems, but feel no pain in your feet.
- Check your feet each evening when you take off your shoes.
- If you have trouble bending over to see your feet, use a mirror to help. You can also ask a family member or caregiver to help you.



# Wash Your Feet Every Day

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- Wash your feet in warm (not hot) water.
- 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 to test the water.
- Do not soak your feet because your skin will get too dry.
- Dry your feet. Be sure to dry between the toes.
- Use talcum powder or cornstarch to keep the skin between your toes dry. This will help to prevent infection.



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# Keep the Skin Soft and Smooth

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- Rub a thin coat of lotion, cream, or petroleum jelly on the tops and bottoms of your feet.
- Do not put lotion or cream between your toes because this might cause an infection.



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# Smooth Corns and Calluses Gently

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- Thick patches of skin, called corns or calluses, can grow on the feet. If you have corns or calluses, check with your foot doctor about the best way to care for them.
- If your provider 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 or calluses.
- Do not use razor blades, corn plasters, or liquid corn and callus removers because they can damage your skin and cause infection.

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# If You Can See, Reach, and Feel Your Feet, Trim Your Toenails Regularly

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- Trim your toenails with nail clippers after you wash and dry your feet.
- Trim your toenails straight across, and cut even with the end of the toe. Do not cut too short and do not cut the corners. This prevents the nails from growing into the skin.
  - You can smooth the corners with an emery board or nail file.

✘ Never use sharp or pointed objects to cut your toenails. Even a metal file can be dangerous.



Trim your toenails straight across

- You can clean your nail clippers once each month by soaking them in a bowl filled with Isopropyl alcohol (you can buy this at any drugstore) for 5 minutes. Scrub the nail clippers with a scrub brush until the clippers are completely clean. Then rinse with water and dry with a towel.
- Have a foot doctor or a certified foot care nurse trim your toenails if:
  - You cannot see or feel your feet
  - You cannot reach your feet
  - Your toenails are thick or yellowed
  - Your nails curve and grow into the skin



Use nail clippers to trim your toenails



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# Wear Shoes and Socks at All Times

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- Wear shoes and socks at all times. Do not walk barefoot when indoors or outside. It is easy to step on something and hurt your feet. You may not feel any pain and may not know that you hurt yourself.
- Always wear socks, stockings, or nylons with your shoes to keep from getting blisters and sores. Do not wear socks that have holes as these can cause pressure and can lead to a foot sore.
- Wear white socks, so you can easily see drainage or blood.
- Choose clean, lightly padded socks that fit well. Socks that have no seams are best.
- Check inside your shoes before you put them on. Make sure the lining is smooth and that there are no objects in your shoes.
- If possible, do not wear the same shoes every day. Change your shoes and socks if you are on your feet more than 4 hours at a time.



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# Tips for Choosing the Right Footwear

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Wearing the right type of shoes is important for keeping your feet healthy. Walking shoes and athletic shoes are good for daily wear. They support your feet and allow them to “breathe.”



- Check the toe box area to be sure it is wide enough. When buying shoes, make sure they feel good and have enough room for your toes.

✘ Do not wear shoes with pointed toes or high heels often. They put too much pressure on your toes. Choose a low heel of one inch or less.



- Buy shoes at the end of the day when your feet are the largest, so you can find the best fit.
- Never wear new shoes for more than 1 to 2 hours a day until they are “broken in.”
- Check your feet after taking off your shoes for red areas. Red areas could mean the shoes are too tight.



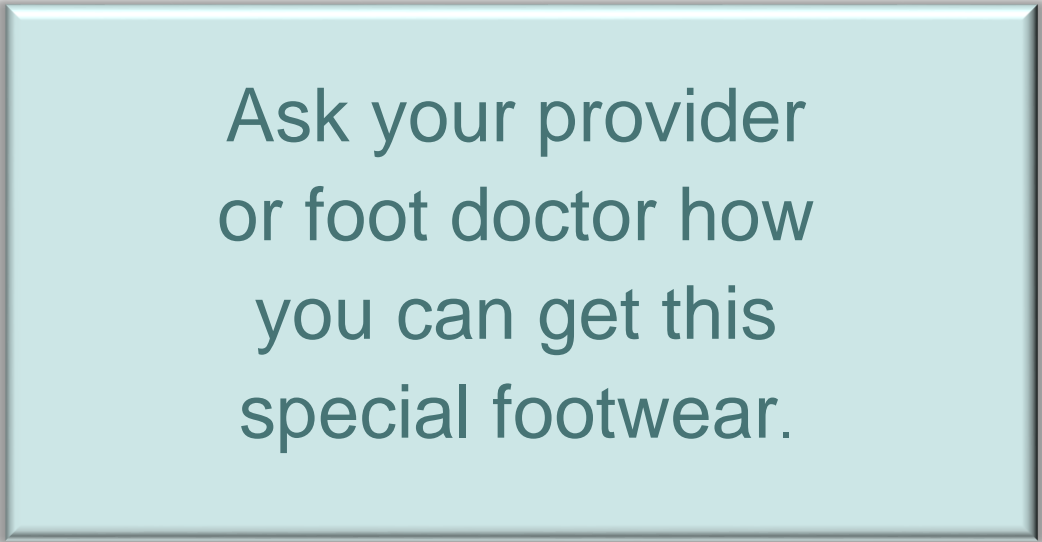
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# Help Paying for Special Footwear

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You may need special shoes or shoe inserts to support your feet. Medicare Part B insurance may cover some of the cost of special shoes or inserts. Ask your insurance plan if they will pay for:

- Depth shoes or inserts. Depth shoes look like walking shoes, but have more room in them. The extra room is for different shaped feet and toes, or for inserts made to fit your feet.
- Custom molded shoes with inserts.



Ask your provider  
or foot doctor how  
you can get this  
special footwear.

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# Protect Your Feet from Hot and Cold

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- Wear shoes at the beach and on hot or cold pavement. You may hurt your feet and not know it.
- Put sunscreen on the top of your feet to prevent sunburn.
- Keep your feet away from space heaters and open fires.
- Wear socks at night if your feet get cold.
- Wear lined boots in the winter to keep your feet warm.
- ✗ Do not put hot water bottles or heating pads on your feet.
- ✗ Do not test bath water with your feet.



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# Keep the Blood Flowing to Your Feet

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- Put your feet up when you are sitting.
- If you do not have a wound on your foot, wiggle your toes for 5 minutes, 2 or 3 times per day. Move your ankles up and down, and in and out to help 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 around your legs.
- ✗ Do not smoke. Smoking can lower the amount of blood flow to your feet. Ask for help to stop smoking. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).

## If You Are Able to Put Pressure on Your Feet, Be More Active

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- Being active improves blood flow to the feet. Ask your health care team for safe ways to be more active each day.
- It is best not to put pressure on a wound, or walk on it because it can make the wound worse. If you have an open wound on your foot or leg, check with your doctor on how to stay active safely without putting pressure on the wound.
- If you are not very active, start slowly.
- Find safe places to be active.
- Wear athletic shoes that give support and are made for your activity.



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# Take Care of Your Diabetes

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- Work with your health care team to make a plan to manage your diabetes.
- Ask your health care team to help you set and reach goals for managing your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol.
- Ask your team to help you choose safe ways to be more active each day and choose healthy foods to eat.



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## Ask Your Health Care Team To:

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- Check your feet at every visit. Check for nerve damage and poor circulation.
- Show you how to care for your feet.
- Refer you to a foot doctor (Podiatrist) if needed.
- Tell you if special shoes would help protect your feet.

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# First Aid for Your Feet

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Accidents and injuries can happen to anyone. Recognizing foot sores or injuries and treating them early is important.

- Wash with soap and water.
  - Avoid using harsh chemicals, like iodine, betadine, alcohol or peroxide, since these can burn your healthy skin.
- Pat the area dry with a clean towel.
- ✗ Do not use antibiotic ointments, like Neosporin or Bacitracin, unless ordered by your provider.
- Cover the area with a clean, plain gauze pad. Wrap gauze around your foot loosely, and secure the gauze with tape.
  - ✗ Do not put tape on the skin.
- **Stay off your feet.** Any pressure or walking on an open wound can make it worse or cause a serious infection.
- Call a doctor if your sore or injury is not getting better in 24 hours or if you see signs of infection:
  - redness
  - bad smell
  - pus
  - swelling
  - pain getting worse
  - fevers or chills

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# Things to Remember

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- Set a time every day to check your feet.
- Wear socks and shoes at all times.
- Write down the date of your next visit to the doctor. Go to all of your appointments and ask any questions that you have.
- Set a date for getting the things you need to take care of your feet:
  - nail clippers
  - pumice stone
  - emery board
  - skin lotion
  - talcum powder
  - plastic mirror
  - socks, walking shoes, and slippers
- Manage your diabetes so you can prevent foot problems.
- ✗ Stop smoking.



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Your Notes





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# To Learn More

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National Diabetes Education Program

**[www.YourDiabetesInfo.org](http://www.YourDiabetesInfo.org)**

American Association of Diabetes Educators

**1-800-338-3633**

[www.diabeteseducator.org](http://www.diabeteseducator.org)

American Diabetes Association

**1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)**

[www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA)

**301-581-9200**

[www.apma.org](http://www.apma.org)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)**

[www.cdc.gov/diabetes](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes)

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

**1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)**

[www.medicare.gov/health/diabetes.asp](http://www.medicare.gov/health/diabetes.asp)

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease

National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse

**1-800-860-8747**

[www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov)