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Low risk of non-healing foot wounds and amputation

Diabetes information and advice to help protect your life and limbs

This leaflet is for all people with a diagnosis of diabetes, including children over the age of 12.

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Your next foot screening appointment is due:

Month:..... 20.....



Why is diabetes a risk to your feet?

Diabetes is a lifelong condition which can cause life-and limb-threatening problems. Some of these problems can occur because the nerves and blood vessels, including those supplying your legs and feet, are damaged.

This can change:

- The feeling in your feet (peripheral sensory neuropathy)
- The circulation in your feet (chronic limb-threatening ischaemia).

These changes can be very gradual and you may not notice them. This is why it is essential you have your feet checked (screened) regularly (usually every one to two years) by a suitably trained health-care worker.

What is my 'foot risk' and what does it mean?

Your foot check has shown that you do not have nerve or blood vessel damage at present, and you are currently at a low risk of developing non-healing foot wounds that are due to your diabetes. The development of foot wounds in people with diabetes is serious as they are linked to an increased risk of heart attacks, strokes, amputations of the foot or leg and early death.

Managing your diabetes, cholesterol and blood pressure, stopping smoking, increasing physical activity and managing your weight helps to reduce the risk of these life-and limb-threatening problems.

Note: You may be at further risk of cardiovascular problems if you have a family history of heart disease.

As your feet are currently at low risk, you can continue to carry out your own general foot care unless you develop a new foot problem.

If you follow the advice and information in this leaflet, it will help you to take care of your feet between your routine foot checks. This will help you to reduce the risk of developing life-and limb-threatening problems.

What should I do if I have a concern or problem with my feet?

If you develop any of the problems listed below, it is important that you contact your Multi-disciplinary Foot Care Team, local Podiatry Department or doctor (GP) for advice as soon as possible (within 24 hours). If you cannot contact any of these and you are concerned, please contact NHS 111 by ringing 111. They may advise you to go to your local accident and emergency department.

Any delay in getting advice or treatment can lead to serious problems.

- An accident or injury to your toe or foot
- A change in the colour or shape of your foot, or swelling to your toe or foot
- A change in the temperature of your foot or lower limb
- New or unexplained pain in your foot
- Oozing or odour from a wound on a toe or foot
- A wound or break in the skin to a toe or foot.

What can I do to reduce my risk of developing problems?

Check your feet every day

You should check your feet every day for any blisters, breaks in the skin, pain or any signs of infection such as swelling, heat or a change in colour. If you cannot do this yourself, ask your partner, carer or other family member to help you.

Wear well-fitting footwear

Badly-fitting shoes are a common cause of irritation or damage to feet. The professional who screened your feet may give you advice about the shoes you



are wearing and about buying new shoes, plus an advice leaflet about footwear.

Wash your feet every day

You should wash your feet every day in warm water and with mild soap.

Rinse them thoroughly and dry them carefully, especially between the toes.

Do not soak your feet as this can damage your skin.

As the sensation in your feet may gradually reduce over time, you may not be able to tell if things are too hot. You should test the temperature of the water with your elbow first or ask someone else to do it for you.

Moisturise your feet every day

If your skin is dry, apply a moisturising cream, avoiding the areas between your toes.

Toenail care

Cut or file your toenails regularly, following the curve of the end of your toe. Use a nail file to make sure that there are no sharp edges which could press into the next toe.

Do not cut down the sides of your nails as you may create a 'spike' of nail which could result in an ingrown toenail.

Socks, stockings and tights

Change your socks, stockings or tights daily. They should not have bulky seams. The tops of socks should not be elasticated.

Check your footwear

Check the bottom of shoes before putting them on to make sure that nothing sharp such as a pin, nail or glass has pierced the outer sole. Also, run your hand inside each shoe to check that no small objects, such as small stones, have fallen in.

Any objects that are inside your footwear or have pierced the outer sole can put your feet at risk of injury.

Stopping smoking

If you smoke, you are strongly advised to stop. Smoking affects your circulation, which can increase the likelihood of amputation.

Over-the-counter foot remedies

Do not use over-the-counter corn or verruca remedies unless they have been specifically recommended by a healthcare professional with experience in looking after the feet of people with diabetes. They are not recommended for anyone with diabetes as they can damage healthy skin and can lead to new wounds and infections.

Appointments

It is important that you attend your regular foot screening appointment (these are usually every one to two years) as well as all of your regular diabetes reviews and eye screening appointments. This reduces the risk of problems developing.

Note: You should have a full diabetes review from your normal diabetes care provider every year.

