

Locala Podiatry Service

At low risk? How to protect your feet and prevent serious problems from diabetes

Why is diabetes a risk to your feet?

Diabetes is a long-term condition that can cause serious problems for your feet, and in some cases, may lead to amputation. This is because diabetes can damage:

- The nerves in your feet (called peripheral neuropathy) – this can change how your feet feel.
- The blood flow to your feet (called ischaemia) – this can affect how well your feet feel.

These changes often happen slowly and you may not notice them at first.

What does a 'low risk foot' mean?

Your foot check shows no current nerve or blood vessel damage, and you are at low risk of developing foot wounds related to diabetes. However, foot wounds in people with diabetes are serious and can increase the risk of heart attacks, strokes, amputations, and early death.

To reduce your risk, it's important to:

- Manage your diabetes, blood pressure, and cholesterol
- Stop smoking
- Stay physically active
- Maintain a healthy weight

As you are low risk, you can continue your own foot care unless a new problem develops. Follow the advice in this leaflet to help care for your feet between routine foot checks, which are every 2 years. Taking these steps helps protect against serious foot and health problems.



If you notice any of these problems, get help quickly

It's very important to get medical advice within 24 hours if you notice any of the following:

- A toe or foot that becomes red, hot or swollen
- A new wound or break in the skin
- Redness or unusual colour changes in your foot or toe
- New or unexplained pain in your foot

Contact your Foot Care Team, local Podiatry Department, or your GP straight away.
If you can't reach them, go to your nearest A&E department.

Delays in getting help can lead to serious complications, so don't wait.

How can I lower my risk of foot problems?

Check your feet every day and look for:

- Blisters
- Breaks in the skin
- Redness, swelling, heat
- Pain

If you can't check your feet yourself, ask a partner, family member, or carer to help.

Wear the right shoes

- Avoid shoes or socks that rub or feel tight
- You will receive a leaflet with advice on choosing suitable footwear from your foot screening professional

Keep your skin healthy

- Wash feet daily in warm water and mild soap.
- Do not soak your feet.
- Dry thoroughly, especially between toes.
- Check water temperature with your elbow or ask someone to test it – you may not feel if it's too hot.
- Use moisturiser on dry skin – but not between the toes.

Care for your toenails

Only cut your nails if your podiatrist says it's safe for you to do so.

Socks, stockings and tights

- Change them daily
- Avoid tight tops or thick seams

Always check your shoes

- Look inside and underneath before putting them on
- Remove any small stones or sharp objects

Hard skin and corns

Do not try to remove them yourself.

Do not use corn plasters or over-the-counter treatments. These can be dangerous if you have diabetes and may cause new wounds.

Appointments

- Attend your foot screening every two years
- Go to your regular diabetes check-ups
- You should have a review with your GP at least once a year