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## ***Diabetes and Foot Care***

Foot care is important for people with diabetes. As the disease progresses it can affect both the blood and nerve supply to your feet. Therefore the maintenance of good foot care and regular foot screenings is of utmost importance.

People with long standing diabetes and/or poorly controlled blood glucose levels are more prone to foot complications. Such complications may involve the blood supply, nerves and joints of the feet. Such people are more prone to infection and poor healing. At worst, situations arise that may require surgical amputation of the affected part.

**Don't let this be YOU.**



***Slow healing ulcer***

***Infection with gangrene***

***Ingrown nail***

### **BLOOD SUPPLY / CIRCULATION**

The arteries supplying blood to the feet and toes are affected by diabetes. This results in less blood flowing through the arteries. This lack of blood flow effects the tissues and therefore any cut or wounds to the feet will not heal quickly. This increases your risk of infection or an ulcer. If the blood supply is reduced there is inadequate nutrition of the tissues and if damaged or infected the body has reduced ability to heal and also reduce the ability of any antibiotic reaching the site.

#### ***Signs of Poor Blood Supply:***

- Sharp cramping in legs or feet when walking short distances
- Sharp cramping or pain in legs or feet when resting or sleeping
- Feet are cold to touch
- Skin appears red/blue colour
- Slow to heal cuts or abrasions
- Loss of hair on toes and top of foot
- Dry thin skin
- Weak, distorted or slow growing nails

### **NERVE SUPPLY**

Diabetes affects your nerves. It may only be temporary but is more likely to permanent damage. The degree of nerve damage is often related to the length of time you have had diabetes and the stability of your blood glucose levels. Low, high or irregular blood glucose levels causes damage to small nerves. This is termed neuropathy.

Neuropathy increases the risk of injury as you loose protective sensation and/or motor nerve functions. Hence, without protective sensation you may fail to notice injuries and consequently fail to care for them appropriately.



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#### **Signs of Neuropathy:**

- Pain or burning feeling in the feet
- Hot or cold sensation
- Numbness
- Pins and needles or tingling in the feet
- Weakness of the feet or legs
- Some instability
- Injury, lesions or ulcers without pain
- Sharp shooting pains in the feet and or legs

#### **BASIC FOOT CARE**

As a precaution to avoid injury to your feet the following steps should be performed daily.

1. **CHECK YOUR FEET:** This is important as the sensation to your feet may be impaired. If you have trouble reaching your feet use a mirror to check the soles of your feet. You should be aware of any cuts, scratches, abrasions, blisters, cracks, corns and calluses.
  - Cuts and blisters should be treated appropriately and corns and calluses removed by a Podiatrist on a regular basis. This is important in reducing your risk of infection and ulceration.
2. Wash your feet well and dry them carefully, check between toes.
3. Moisturise with a suitable cream (avoid cream between the toes).
4. Use clean cotton or woollen socks that are not too tight.
5. Protect your feet indoors and out with shoes that fit well.
6. Take extreme care or avoid heaters, hot water bottles or cold to your feet.
7. Seek professional advice with foot care.
8. Avoid corn plasters or any products with acids unless directed to do so by a trained health care professional.
9. In case of injury, wash and pat dry the area. Apply a good antiseptic (eg. Povidone Iodine) and cover with a sterile dressing. If no improvement is noted within 24hrs seek professional help to avoid complications.

You should check your feet daily; with regular assessment of your feet carried out by your doctor, podiatrist or diabetic nurse. Seek professional help if you have any open wounds, corns/calluses, ingrown toenails or if you are unable to care for your own toenails, if your feet are unusually red or swollen or if you have any concerns regarding your foot health.