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## **Foot Inspection**

If you have diabetes, maintaining the health of your feet is important to safeguard against severe consequences. Because diabetes restricts blood flow and nervous system function, small wounds and blisters can quickly turn into limb-threatening infections.

### **Special instructions to diabetic patients**

#### **Inspect Feet Daily:**

Use a mirror or have someone help you look at your feet. Check for puncture wounds, bruises, redness, warmth, blisters, scratches, cuts and nail problems. Feel each foot for swelling. Examine between your toes. Check six locations on the bottom of each foot:

1. Tip of Big Toe
2. Bottom of little toes
3. Bottom of the middle toes
4. The heel
5. Outside edge of the foot
6. Across the ball of the foot

Watch for changes in your foot's shape, and note any differences in skin sensation. Look for new bunions, calluses, or corns and report them to your health provider. Also, keep track of the color of your foot. Darken skin or hair loss may indicate a reduced blood supply, which can mean slower healing of cuts and scrapes. Bruises indicate injuries, and you should alert your doctor or therapist about any bruises within calluses.

***If you are unable to examine your feet, ask someone else to check them for you.***

#### **Determine Sensation:**

- If you have diabetes, you can hurt yourself and not know it. Use a feather or facial tissue to brush your foot periodically, and keep track of your ability to feel light touch. Also, be sure your foot can sense the difference between hot and cold water. Before dipping your foot in water, test the temperature with your hand first.
- The top of the foot is usually the first area to lose some of its ability to feel. The bottom of the foot may follow suit. These areas may not feel numb, but a gradual decrease in your ability to feel light touch, temperature or your shoes indicates a risk.



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### **Keep Feet Clean and Moisturized**

- Wash your feet everyday with mild soap and warm water. Test the water temperature with your hand first. **Do NOT** soak your feet. Pat each foot dry with a towel. Use lotion to keep your feet soft, but **do NOT** put lotion between your toes.
- Toenails should be trimmed by a professional! If you find an ingrown toenail, inform your doctor. Avoid over-the-counter medications or heating pads unless advised by your doctor. **Do NOT** use sharp instruments on your feet, and **do NOT** put your feet on radiators or in front of the fireplace.

### **Choose Shoes and Socks Carefully**

- Keep your feet warm. Wear loose socks to bed, and do not get your feet wet in snow or rain. Wear warm socks and shoes in winter. Never walk barefoot or in sandals outside.
- Buy new shoes late in the day, when your feet are larger. New shoes should not have a “breaking in” period. Shoes should not be too tight in width, length, the back or bottom. Choose shoes made of leather, and avoid pointed-toe styles and high heels. Wear new shoes for only 2-hours or less at a time, and don’t wear the same pair every day. **Do NOT** lace your shoes too tightly or loosely.
- Remember to wear clean, dry socks. Avoid socks with holes or wrinkles. Square-toed socks are best, because they don’t squeeze your toes. Avoid stockings with elastic tops. Thin cotton socks are absorbent for summer wear.

### **Communicate with Clinicians**

- Be careful if you’ve had problems with foot ulcers, fungal toenail infections, stress fractures, or other foot fractures. Other warning signals are slow-healing wounds, bunions, corns and thick calluses.
- Once you begin wearing your pedorthic devices, make sure you regularly examine your feet and footwear to check for anything that looks different or out of the ordinary. Check for cuts, scratches, blisters, etc. Look for swelling, redness, or a rise in temperature. If this happens, you should discontinue use and call for an appointment. Your practitioner will determine the cause and improve function of your device.
- Your family history is important. Let your nurse or doctor know if anyone in your family with diabetes has had toes, feet, or legs amputated. **Do NOT** smoke or sit with legs crossed, which constricts blood flow to the lower extremities.
- Take care of your feet. Check them daily and see a nurse or doctor if you note anything suspicious. When diabetes hinders sensation and healing ability, only daily vigilance can protect against major complications.