

Appendix 9

Diabetes and Foot Care: A Patient's Checklist

Many people with diabetes have problems with their feet. You can prevent serious problems by following these basic guidelines. Ask your doctor to explain your risk factors for foot problems.

DO...

- check your feet every day for cuts, cracks, bruises, blisters, sores, infections or unusual markings.
- use a mirror to see the bottom of your feet if you can't lift them up.
- check the colour of your legs and feet. If there is swelling, warmth or redness or if you have pain, see your doctor or foot specialist right away.
- clean a cut or scratch with a mild soap and water and cover with a dry dressing for sensitive skin.
- trim your nails straight across.
- wash and dry your feet every day, especially between the toes.
- apply a good skin lotion every day on your heels and soles. Wipe off any excess lotion.
- change your socks every day.
- always wear a good supportive shoe.
- always wear professionally fitted shoes from a reputable store. Professionally fitted orthotics may help.
- choose shoes with low heels (under 5 cm high).
- buy shoes in the late afternoon (since your feet swell slightly by then).
- avoid extreme cold and heat (including the sun).
- exercise regularly.
- see a foot care specialist if you need advice or treatment.

DON'T...

- cut your own corns or calluses.
- treat your own in-growing toenails or slivers with a razor or scissors. See your doctor or foot care specialist.
- use over-the-counter medications to treat corns and warts. They are dangerous for people with diabetes.
- apply heat to your feet with a hot water bottle or electric blanket. You could burn your feet without realizing it.
- soak your feet.
- take very hot baths.
- use lotion between your toes.
- walk barefoot inside or outside.
- wear tight socks, garters or elastics, or knee highs.
- wear over-the-counter insoles – they can cause blisters if they are not right for your feet.
- sit for long periods of time.
- smoke.

Adapted with permission from: Casella A. Feeling well...diabetes and foot care, a patient's checklist. *Knowing Diabetes*. © Diabetes Hamilton, 2002.