



Diabetic Footcare

How does Diabetes affect the feet?

1) Nerve Damage

Diabetes can affect the nerves in the feet by distorting the messages which go from the foot to the brain causing numbness, loss of feeling, loss of pain sensation and temperature perception; or burning, shooting pains or pins and needles. The medical name for nerve damage is NEUROPATHY. **LOSS OF FEELING:** You may not realise that you have lost some of the feeling or sensation in your feet and will be unaware of any knock or injury and could continue to walk on an injured foot and damage it even further. You may also be unable to distinguish between hot and cold and could burn your feet in a hot bath or on a hot water bottle or in front of a fire.

PAINFUL FEET AND LEGS: Some people with diabetes experience burning, tingling or shooting pains in the legs and feet which are often worse at night and may be aggravated by the touch of the bed clothes. If these pains are troublesome, contact your doctor and do try to keep your diabetes under control. High blood sugars can affect the blood supply to the feet.

2) CIRCULATORY PROBLEMS

Diabetes can affect the blood supply to the feet and legs causing any sores or cuts to be slow to heal. Pain can occur in the calves of the legs when walking due to the reduced blood supply. Cigarette smoking will aggravate this problem so if you have diabetes you should STOP SMOKING, if you are overweight LOSE WEIGHT and keep walking – exercise can help.

3) RISK OF INFECTION

A minor cut or sore can easily become infected if not properly treated, so never neglect any injury to your foot. Any breaks in the skin should be cleaned thoroughly and covered with a dressing. If the injury is more serious or if it does not heal get prompt advise from your doctor, nurse or podiatrist.

4) CHANGE IN FOOT SHAPE

Diabetes can cause your foot to alter shape. Your toes may become clawed (curled), the arch and ball of the foot more prominent and you may need a deeper shoe.

NAILS

When trimming your nails always cut them straight across remembering that they are there for protection and should not be cut too short. Try not to leave a splinter of nail behind and never poke your scissors down the side of the nail. If you cannot see or reach your nails or if they are thick and horny ask your podiatrist to cut them for you. If you have ingrowing toe nails visit your podiatrist.

CORNS AND CALLUS

Hard dry skin can build up on the tops of the toes, heels or under the sole of the feet. Callus is a normal reaction of the skin to friction and pressure and should be trimmed away by your podiatrist or it will cause problems. Corns can cause problems if your shoes press on them, again you should always get treatment from your podiatrist, NEVER treat corns and calluses yourself and NEVER use corn cures.

DRY SKIN

If your skin is very dry use a moisturising cream to keep the skin supple – your podiatrist can recommend the best one for you. Apply it daily over both feet but not between the toes.