

Diabetic Foot Care: You and Your Feet



Why is foot care important for people with diabetes?

- ❑ Of the 2 million people in Canada with diabetes, approximately 4 to 10% will develop a foot ulcer (sore).
- ❑ Up to 24% of those who do develop a foot ulcer will go on to have an amputation (partial foot or leg) because the ulcer did not heal.

What is a foot ulcer (sore) and why do they occur?

- ❑ A foot ulcer is a break or opening in the skin, which disrupts the normal protection of the skin against harmful bacteria.
- ❑ These breaks or cracks can start from an ingrown toenail, callouses, dry skin, injuries, friction or blisters from poorly fitted shoes.
- ❑ Neuropathy (a loss of sensation) can occur with diabetes and often leads to ulcers and amputation.

What are the risk factors for developing foot ulcers?

- ❑ Loss of sensation (neuropathy) is the largest risk factor for development of ulcers.
- ❑ Changes in the shape of the foot.
- ❑ A history of foot ulcers.
- ❑ Poor circulation.
- ❑ Smoking.
- ❑ Poor control of blood sugars.
- ❑ Poorly fitted shoes.

What are the signs of poor circulation?

Poor circulation or Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD) is due to an early hardening of the arteries (arteriosclerosis) or blockages (fatty deposits known as atherosclerosis). Common signs include:

Pain

- ❑ Do your feet or legs hurt when at rest or when you walk?

Loss Of Sensation

- ❑ Can you tell when something touches your foot?
Do you have numbness or tingling in your feet?
Have you noticed when you have stepped on an object?

Colour And Temperature

- ❑ Are your feet cool to touch? Do your feet ever become blue, purple or very pale? Do you have swelling in your feet or legs?

Foot Ulcers (Sores)

- ❑ Do you have any foot sores that do not heal, are very slow to heal or reoccur?

Skin Changes

- ❑ Do you have any callouses, thickened skin or blisters on your feet? Are your feet or legs dry, scaly or shiny?
Do you have any loss of hair on your legs?

Any of these signs mean your feet are calling for help!! Pay attention!! Contact your health care team.

What should you do if you have a foot ulcer?

Follow advice from your health care team. This may include decreasing pressure to the area, regular visits for assessment and wound care, and controlling your blood sugar.

Watch for signs of infection (redness, increased drainage, pain, odour, and/or swelling), and report them to a health professional as soon as possible.

So what can you do to prevent foot ulcers?

The best thing you can do to prevent foot ulcers and amputation is to take care of your feet and your health.

Top ten tips for good foot care

1. Check your feet daily.

Look at your bare feet for red areas, cuts, swelling, blisters, rash, cracks, or signs of infection such as increased redness, pain, and/or drainage. Use a mirror for hard to see areas.

2. Wash your feet daily.

Warm water with mild non - perfumed soap and dry well, especially between the toes. DO NOT soak your feet.

3. Keep your skin soft.

After washing put on a thin coat of non-perfumed lotion. Do not put any between your toes.

4. Trim your toe nails.

If you can reach AND see your toenails, trim them when needed, cut them straight across, not rounded. Nail clippers only, no scissors or sharp objects.

NO BATHROOM SURGERY!!

Only trained professionals should treat callouses, thick brittle nails or blisters. Avoid over the counter corn or callous products.

5. Proper shoes and socks.

Always wear shoes that fit well and offer good protection. NEVER GO BARE FOOT EVEN INDOORS!! Use cotton socks that are not too tight.

6. Keep the blood flowing to your feet.

DON'T SMOKE!! Smoking reduces blood flow.

DO WALK!! Walking promotes blood flow.

7. Protect your feet from hot and cold.

Always check water temperature before putting your feet in it. Do not use hot water bottles, electric blankets, space heaters or heating pads to your legs or feet as these may cause burns.

8. Regular visits to your health care team.

Visit your doctor or community nurse regularly to monitor your feet and your health.

9. Activity and nutrition.

DO WALK!! Being active stimulates blood flow, keeps weight down, helps with blood sugar control and is fun! A dietician can help you make healthy choices for a well balanced diet.



10. Pay attention.

Remember that early treatment is always the best way to avoid major problems. Pay close attention to your feet and body and if problems arise visit your health care team.

DON'T WAIT!!

List three things you can start with today!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Other Sources For Information:

www.diabetes.ca
www.worldwidewounds.com
www.dialadietician.org
www.foothealth.ca

For more information, contact the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority Community Health Centres/Offices.

North Shore

Central Intake:
North Shore Home Health
604-983-6740

Lion's Gate Hospital
231 East 15th Street
North Vancouver
WOCN Office: 604-984-5871

Vancouver

Central Intake:
Vancouver Community Health
604-263-7377

St. Paul's Hospital
1081 Burrard Street
CNS Wound Care:
604-806-8484

Vancouver Hospital
899 West 12th Avenue
WOCN Office: 604-875-5788

Spinal Cord Wound
Care Program
WOCN Office: 604-875-5105

Richmond

Central Intake:
Richmond Community Health
604-278-3361

Richmond Hospital
WOCN Office: 604-244-5235

Coast Garibaldi

Powell River Homecare
3rd Floor -
5000 Joyce Avenue
Powell River, BC V8A 5R3
604-485-3310

**Home and Community Care
Sechelt**
P.O. Box 2420
Sechelt, BC V0N 3A0
604-741-0726

**Home and Community Care
Squamish**
P.O. Box 220,
1140 Hunter Place
Squamish, BC V0N 3G0
604-892-2293
Toll free 1-877-892-2231

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