

Diabetes: Foot care: Diabetic foot care for the low risk foot

Taking care of your feet is an important part of staying healthy when you have diabetes. Knowing your level of risk to have foot problems helps you know how to keep your feet healthy.

Your foot exam shows you are at low risk for having foot problems.

At this time you have no concerns with your nails or skin. Your foot examination shows that you have no open sores, no feelings of numbness, tingling, burning or throbbing in your feet. No loss of sensation (feeling) in your feet has been found with a monofilament test done by your healthcare provider. You also don't have any changes to the shape of your foot.

Even though you're low risk, you can still develop foot problems. These may include problems with:

- your skin or nails (redness over a toe or other area, ingrown toe nail)
- corns or calluses
- sensation (a feeling of numbness or tingling in your legs and feet)
- circulation in your legs and feet (pain in your legs when you're walking that goes away when you rest)

If you see any of these problems, make an appointment to see your healthcare provider within 1 month or sooner. Your healthcare provider will talk with you about any extra appointments you might need for your feet.

Protecting your feet

Check your feet every day

- Look between your toes and at the top and bottom of your feet for swelling, redness, sores, corns, or calluses. Use a mirror or ask someone to help if you can't see your feet. You can also use a selfie stick with your smart phone, or a telescopic inspection mirror. This type of mirror is available at most auto supply stores or online.
- Feel for temperature differences of your feet. Check to see if some areas are warmer or cooler than other areas. A change in temperature may alert you to early signs of inflammation or infection. To help check for this you can use a personal infrared thermometer. This type of thermometer is available at most pharmacies or online.
- Use the Diabetes Foot Health Self-Screening Tool to examine your feet at home. It will also help you keep track of the condition of your feet and learn how to care for your feet.

Check your feet for sensation (feeling)

- You can test for feeling with the Touch- the-toes test at home (use the link for step-by-step instructions). This test should be done once a year if you're at low risk. It can help you find out if you have sensation (feeling) in your feet. Have someone touch your toes and write down the results. This video shows how to test for feeling: Testing for sensitivity in your feet | Diabetes UK.
- If you lose feeling in your feet you're at higher risk for sores, infections, and other problems.

Wash your feet every day

- Use warm water and mild soap. Be careful to dry well between your toes.

Apply a moisturizer (lotion) to your feet every day

- Cover both the top and bottom of your feet but **don't** put moisturizer between your toes.
- Use a moisturizer that has urea in it. Ask your healthcare provider about what lotion is best for you.
- If it's hard for you to reach your feet, you may want to get a lotion applicator. You can also use a plastic grocery bag - put the lotion in the bag, put your foot in, and use the handles of the bag to move it around to get the lotion onto your foot.

Cut your toenails straight across

- Don't cut these on an angle and smooth the edges with a nail file. If you can't cut your own toe nails consider finding a foot care nurse or a podiatrist. A pedicure is not a safe option when you have diabetes.
- Find a list of foot care nurses in Alberta at Alberta Foot Care Nurses.
- Find a list of podiatrists in Alberta at albertapodiatry.com.

Foot care nurse: _____

Podiatrist: _____

Wear shoes that fit well

- You can learn more about finding the proper shoe fit from Wounds Canada.
- Your shoes should support your feet and not rub or pinch. The heels should be lower than 5 cm (2 inches).
- Your feet swell slightly during the day so it's best to buy your shoes late in the day. Shop at a well-known store with staff who know how to professionally fit your shoes.

Check for objects inside your shoes

- Look inside your shoes **every time** before you put them on.

Get a complete foot check-up once a year

- This assessment by your healthcare provider is important to help keep you healthy.

If you smoke, try to quit or cut down

- One cigarette lowers the blood flow to your legs for up to 4 hours. Smoking can put you at higher risk of losing your foot if you develop more serious problems.
- If you want help, call Alberta Quits at **1-866-710-QUIT (7848)**.

Foot care checklist

Do:

- Wear socks at night if your feet get cold.
- Put your feet up when you're sitting.
- Wiggle your toes and move your ankles around for a few minutes several times a day to help blood flow in your feet and legs.
- Get some activity every day (helps you have better blood flow).

Don't:

- Go barefoot, even indoors (consider having a pair of well-fitting shoes to only wear inside).
- Wear anything tight around your legs such as tight or knee-high socks.
- Cross your legs or sit for long periods of time.
- Use a hot water bottle or heating pad on your feet.
- Use over-the-counter insoles (these can cause blisters if they don't fit well).
- Use over-the-counter medicines to treat warts or corns (these aren't safe for people with diabetes).

Warning signs that need attention

- Pain in your lower legs when you walk that doesn't go away when you rest.
- Burning feeling or new pain in your feet.
- Red areas over any toes (may be from shoes that don't fit well).
- Corns, calluses, or blisters - even if just starting (may be from shoes that don't fit well).

Talk to your healthcare provider as soon as possible (within 1 week) if you see any of these changes to your feet or legs. Ask if you need to see a specialist or have more testing.

When to get urgent medical help:

Call your healthcare provider **right away** for an appointment today or go to the emergency department if you have:

- cold, painful, or change in colour of your feet (pale, blue, or red)
- red, hot, swollen feet that may or may not be painful
- a swollen area that is red even if it doesn't hurt
- any open sore on your foot that is draining or leaking fluid

Your self-care management plan

To help care for your feet you'll need to closely watch your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol. Keep track of your results to make it easier to review and plan your care. You and your healthcare provider will decide on what the best levels are for you.

	Current Level	Goal
Blood sugar or A1C		
Blood Pressure		
Cholesterol		

Last diabetes foot exam	Date:
Last diabetes eye health exam	Date:

To see this information online and learn more, visit MyHealth.Alberta.ca and type in diabetic foot care into the search bar.

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information call Health Link at 811.

References

Foot care checklist used with permission from Diabetes Canada 2018 Clinical Practice Guidelines.

Self-management table adapted from the New Brunswick Diabetes Foot Care Clinical Pathway.

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Care instructions may be adapted by your healthcare provider. If you have questions about a medical condition or this instruction, talk with your doctor or appropriate healthcare provider.