



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

Therapy Services Fact Sheet

Diabetes and your Feet

Diabetes can cause two major changes in the feet:

- **Blood vessel damage** (from poor circulation),
- **Nerve damage** (neuropathy - impaired sensation).

Poor circulation makes it difficult for our body to repair damage from scratches, cuts, burns or infection, especially if we cannot feel the damage occurring. It is very important to receive proper foot care to prevent complications of diabetes.

The following information will help you to maintain healthy feet.

Blood Glucose Level

Maintaining healthy blood glucose levels (BGL) is an essential factor in preventing diabetes complications.

Blood glucose levels should be monitored regularly to avoid large fluctuations, ie not 3-15 mmol/L's. Ideally BGL's should be consistent, ie 5-10 mmol/Ls.

To achieve consistent blood sugar levels, it is important to work closely with your doctor in regards to medication, testing methods, diet and exercise. It is also important to consult a dietician and a diabetic nurse.

Circulation

Your circulation will improve with regular exercise. Maintaining acceptable blood glucose levels will minimise damage to blood vessels.

Nail Care

Nails should be cut straight across - not down the corners. If cut incorrectly, in-growing toenails may result, leading to infection.

DO NOT:

- wear tight socks, stockings, garters or shoes,
- smoke (nicotine constricts blood vessels),
- expose feet to extremes of temperature (such as too close to the heater or hot water bottles or bare feet on cold tiled floors).

Corns and Callouses

Do not use medicated corn cures or plasters as they are caustic and can cause significant damage to the feet. See a Podiatrist instead, as they can treat the corns and callouses as well as addressing the 'cause' factors.

Shoes

Well fitting shoes are important at all times. Shoes may be the reason for sore feet, a corn, callus, etc. Check that there are no rough edges inside the shoes. The shoe must be appropriate for the activity. It is a good idea to show your Podiatrist your new shoes before wearing them.

Washing and Moisturising

Wash your feet daily using mild soap. It is important to dry thoroughly to prevent fungal or bacterial infections. Apply a water-based cream to dry areas of the foot (commonly the heels).

Injuries

Cuts, scratches, burns, insect bites or blisters should be attended to immediately. They should be cleaned with antiseptic such as Betadine and covered with a clean dressing such as Handypor (not plastic bandaids). If signs of inflammation or infection appear (heat, redness, swelling and pain) seek advice from your doctor or podiatrist.