

# Foot Care

Over time, diabetes (die-a-bee-tees) can damage many parts of the body. When your blood sugar is higher than normal on a regular basis, you have a greater chance of damaging the nerves and blood vessels in your legs and feet. This can lead to many different problems.

**Peripheral** (puh-rif-a-rule) **Neuropathy** (nur-a-pa-thee) is the name for nerve damage to the legs and feet caused by high blood sugar. It might cause pain, burning, or tingling in your feet. These feelings may be worse at night while you are resting.

Your feet may also feel numb. If your feet are numb, you may not be able to feel pain, heat, or cold. If you do not have a lot of feeling in your feet, you may not know that you have a sore on your foot, like a cut, blister or burn. The sore could get worse, and become infected.

Talk to your doctor if you have pain, burning, tingling, or numbness in your feet. There are special pain medicines that may help.

Sometimes, the small blood vessels in your legs and feet become damaged from high blood sugar. This is called **PVD** or peripheral (puh-rif-a-rule) vascular (vaz-q-lar) disease. This causes poor blood flow, which makes it harder for a sore or infection to heal.

If you have PVD you may feel these symptoms in your feet and legs:

- Coldness
- Swelling
  
- Changes in skin color (they might look pale white, red, blue or purple)
- Pain while walking or even at night while you are resting.

Talk to your doctor if you notice these changes. The right type of exercise and medicine may help. Sometimes surgery may also help.

### **Doing these things will help keep your feet healthy:**

- Stop smoking!
- Keep you blood sugar levels as close to normal as you can.
- Wash your feet every day with warm water and a mild soap. Then gently pat your feet dry. Always dry between your toes.
- Rub a lotion on your feet every day, but never put the lotion between the toes or over cuts or blisters in the skin.
- Look at the tops, bottoms, and sides of your feet every day. If you see red areas, sores or changes in the shape of your feet that stay for more than 1 or 2 days, call your doctor. **Do not wait!**
- Always wear shoes and socks. Shoes made out of leather or canvas are best. Wear slippers inside your house.
- Wear socks or stockings without bulky seams at the toes. If the elastic at the top of you socks leaves marks on your skin, they are too tight
- When you visit the doctor, take your shoes and socks off and ask the doctor to look at your feet.
- Visit a podiatrist (po-die-a-trist) every year. This is a doctor who takes special care of the feet.

**If you would like to learn more about diabetes,  
contact the Diabetes Association of Greater Cleveland.  
Ask to talk with an educator.**



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