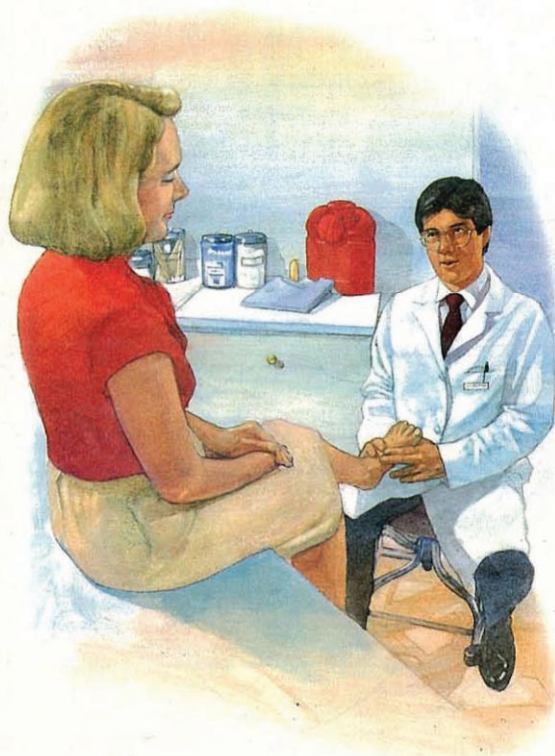


# Diabetic Foot Care

**Treatment and  
Self-Care for  
Healthy Feet**



# Are Your Feet in Trouble?

Whether you're rushing to a business meeting or standing in line at the post office, you depend on your feet to keep you moving. But diabetes increases your chances of developing foot problems, so you can't afford to take your feet for granted. Give them the special care they need.

## Foot Problems Won't Just Go Away

Because you have diabetes, your feet have fewer defenses against everyday wear and tear. Nerve damage may mean that you can't feel injuries. Reduced blood flow may prevent injuries from healing. In fact, even minor injuries may quickly progress to serious infections. So, take a look at your feet. What kind of shape are they in? A "yes" answer to any of the questions below means that your feet may be in trouble and you could benefit from medical care.

Are there red spots?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you have blisters, corns, or calluses?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you feel tingling?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Are your feet cold?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Are your toenails thick or ingrown?

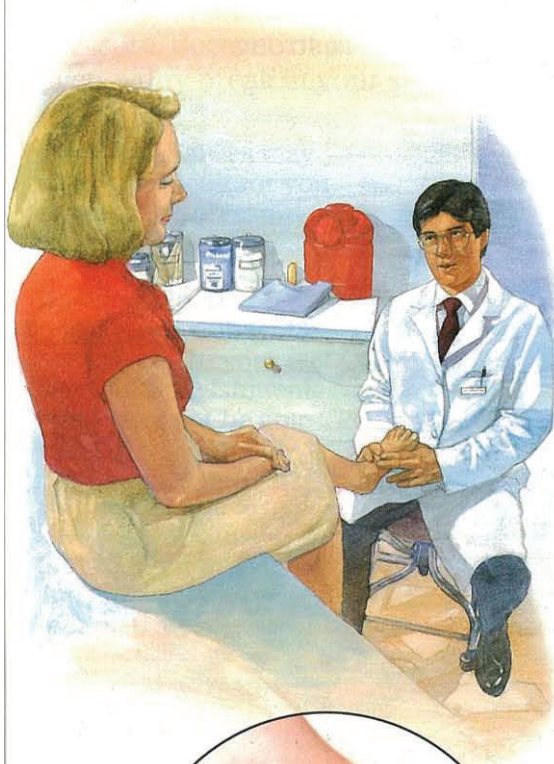
Yes ☐ No ☐



Callus

**Pressure problems**, such as calluses or blisters, can develop without your being aware of them.





## Take Lifelong Care of Your Feet

Whether you have injuries that require special attention or you just need routine foot exams, your primary care physician and other members of your diabetes health care team can start you out on a foot health program. Begin by **learning about your feet** and how diabetes can damage them. **Understand your health care team's role** in preventing and treating foot problems. In some cases, you may also be referred to a **podiatrist**—a foot care specialist. And **practice foot self-care** to monitor your foot health and guard your feet from harm.



Padding

**To relieve pressure, your Podiatrist may recommend padding or special shoes.**

# A View of a Healthy Foot

Imagine: With each step, a healthy foot withstands the pressure of three to four times a person's body weight. A healthy foot can take all this pressure because it is strong and flexible, and can "bounce back" quickly.

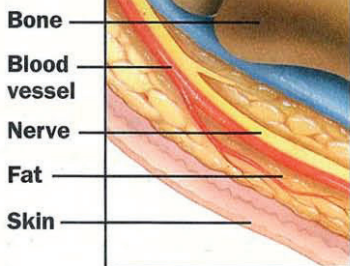
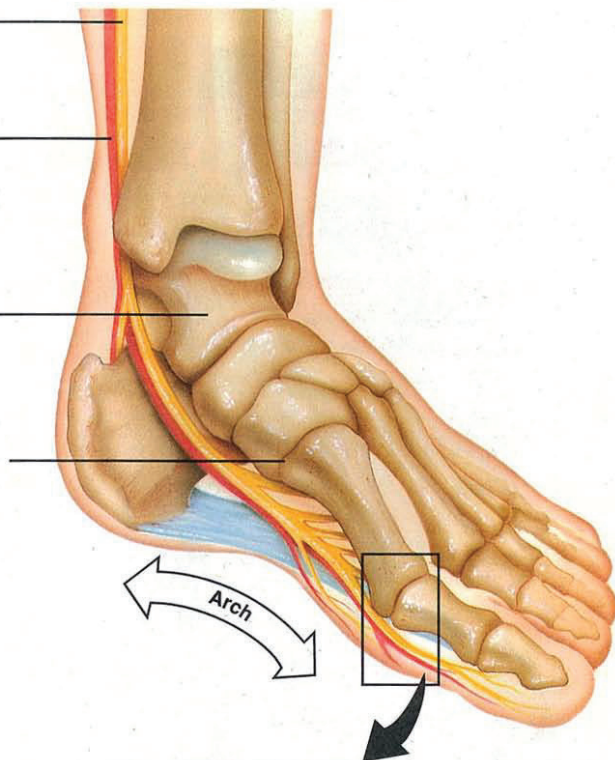
**Nerves** let you feel pain, vibration, pressure, heat, and cold.

**Blood vessels** carry nutrients and oxygen to your feet to nourish them and help them heal from injuries.

**Bones** give your foot shape and help distribute the pressure from your body's weight.

**Joints** are the connections between your bones. They help absorb pressure and allow your foot to move. Your **arch** is a group of joints that provides stability for your entire foot.

**Skin and fat** form a "cushion" that absorbs pressure and protects your foot from infection.



**Pressure areas** absorb pounding pressure from the body's weight.



# Diabetes and Your Feet

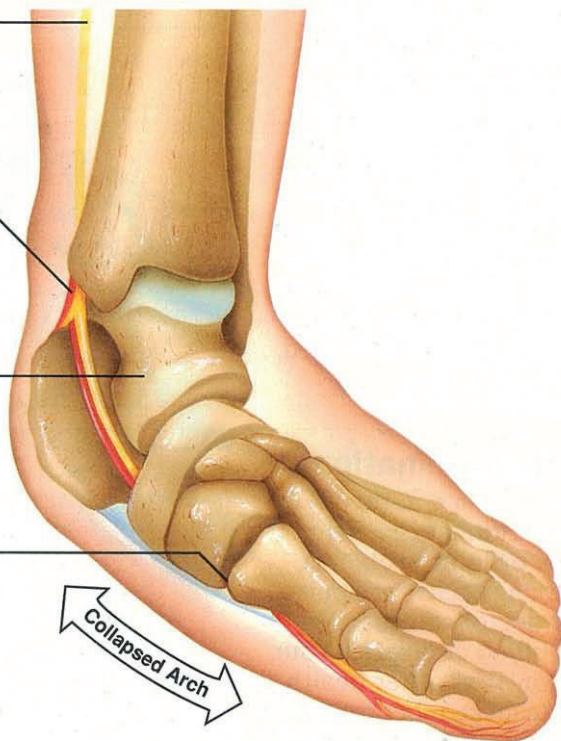
When you have diabetes, daily wear and tear can take its toll on your feet—especially in areas that absorb the most pressure. Because of poor blood circulation or loss of feeling, even a tiny break in your skin may develop into an infection.

**Damaged nerves** may make it difficult for you to feel pain, pressure, heat, and cold.

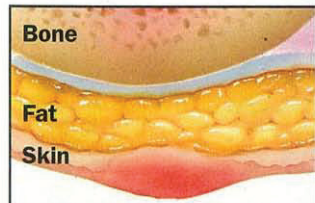
**Blocked blood vessels** bring fewer nutrients and oxygen to your feet. Without nourishment, sores may not be able to heal.

**Weakened bones** may slowly shift, causing your foot to become deformed and changing the way your foot distributes pressure.

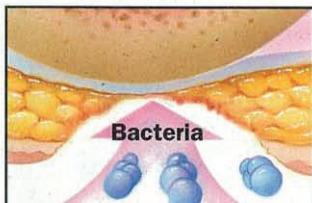
**Collapsed joints**, especially a collapsed arch, can no longer absorb pressure or provide stability. The surrounding skin may begin to break down.



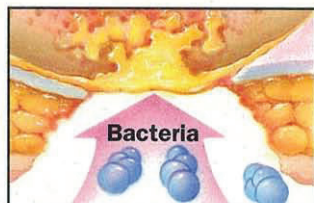
**Broken-down skin**, caused by too much pressure, can lead to sores or a serious infection, if bacteria are present.



**Blisters or calluses** start as red or warm spots. They are often caused by unrelieved skin pressure.



**Ulcers** (sores) may result if blisters or calluses reach the skin's inner layers. Ulcers may become infected.



**Bone infection** may occur if infected ulcers spread. Untreated bone infections may lead to loss of the foot.

# Evaluating Your Feet

A thorough evaluation is the first step in your foot health program. It includes a review of the history of your diabetes and your overall health. A foot exam and x-rays or other tests are also often part of the evaluation.

## Medical History

Your Podiatrist will want to know about any foot problems you have now or have had in the past. You may be asked about medications you're taking. Your answers help determine the level of care your feet need.

## Foot Examination

A foot examination can reveal circulation, nerve, skin, bone, or joint problems. By taking each foot's pulse, your Podiatrist can check how well blood circulates. Your Podiatrist examines the condition of your skin and looks for any weakness or collapse in your bones and joints.





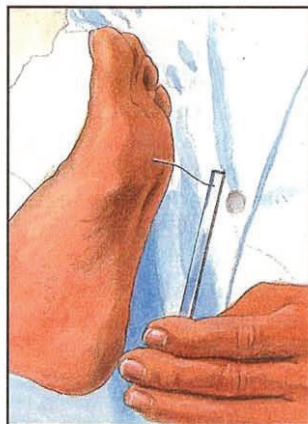
## Possible Tests

Your health care team may request these or other tests to help pinpoint your particular foot problems.

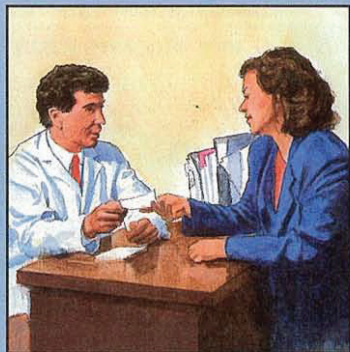
- **A tuning fork** and the **Semmes-Weinstein test** each check your level of feeling.
- **The Doppler test** measures blood flow.
- **X-rays** show bone weakness or other bone problems.
- **Scans**, such as bone scans, **MRI** (magnetic resonance imaging), and **CT** (computed tomography), can reveal bone and skin infections.



**A tuning fork** checks your sensitivity to vibration, often the first sensation to be lost.



**The Semmes-Weinstein test** uses a wire to check your sensitivity to pressure.



## Your Treatment Plan

Your health care team uses the results of your evaluation to create an individual foot care program for you. Your program may range from developing an effective self-care routine to treating minor foot problems to surgery.

# Preventing Foot Infections

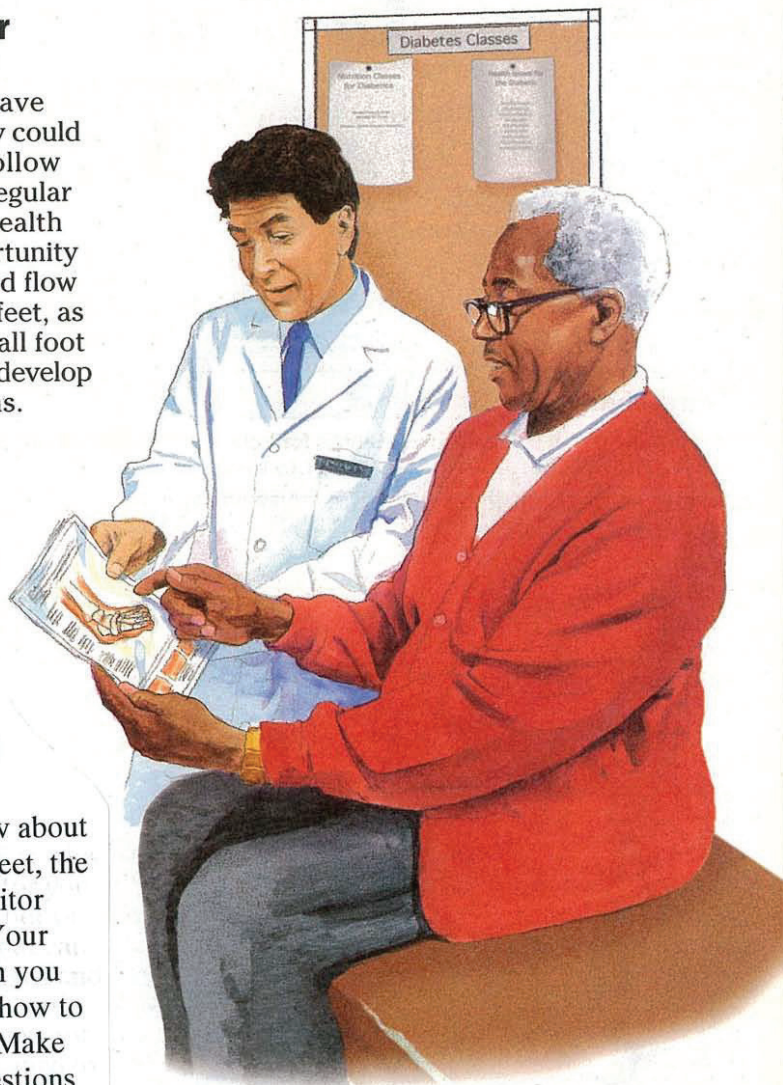
Preventing foot infections is the best step toward protecting the health of your feet. Your doctor or another member of your team examines your feet regularly, teaches you about self-care, provides foot “maintenance,” and may recommend special footwear to help relieve extra pressure.

## Examining Your Feet Regularly

Even if you don't have symptoms now, they could develop quickly. Follow your schedule for regular exams. Give your health care team the opportunity to monitor the blood flow and feeling in your feet, as well as to catch small foot injuries before they develop into larger infections.

## Teaching you Self-Care

The more you know about diabetes and your feet, the better you can monitor your foot health. Your Podiatrist can teach you warning signs and how to inspect your feet. Make sure to ask any questions you have about your foot health.

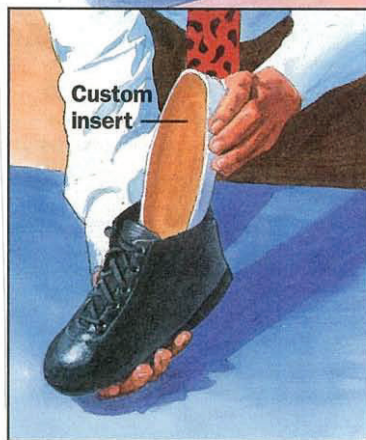




## Providing Routine Foot Care

Routine foot care helps keep thick and ingrown nails, blisters, corns, calluses, and other skin irritations from developing into infections or ulcers. Only your Podiatrist should:

- **Trim or thin nails** to keep them from becoming ingrown or thick.
- **Treat blisters** so they won't become infected.
- **Trim corns and calluses** so they won't develop into infections or ulcers.
- **Provide customised footwear.** If areas of your feet have extra pressure you may require customised footwear. This will protect pressure sensitive areas of your feet and helps keep existing skin irritations from worsening.



**Custom inserts** can provide extra cushioning and support for your feet.

# Treating Foot Infections

Any minor foot problem—from a corn or callus to a crack in your skin—can become infected. If left untreated, infections can become life-threatening. Prompt treatment by your doctor can help clear up the infection and restore your health.

## Minor Infections

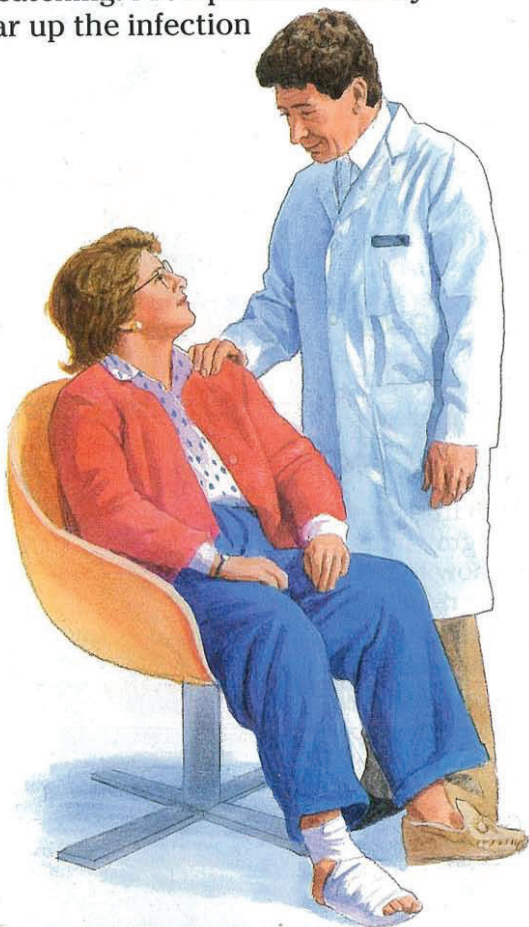
If your doctor diagnoses a minor infection, you'll be started on an individualized treatment program. Your doctor's goal, like your own, is to help the infected area heal and keep the infection from spreading.

## Treatment

Your Podiatrist will examine and clean the infected area. You may be given antibiotics by your doctor to further combat the infection. Take the full course of antibiotics even if the sore begins to look better.

## Follow-up Visits

Even with antibiotics and other treatment, infections may take a long time to heal. Be sure to keep all of your follow-up appointments to ensure complete treatment and proper healing.



**Antibiotics** may be prescribed by your doctor to help fight foot infection.



## Severe Infections

Infections that spread to bones can also travel throughout your foot and up your leg. To treat a severe infection, your doctor will likely refer you to a surgeon for surgery at a hospital.

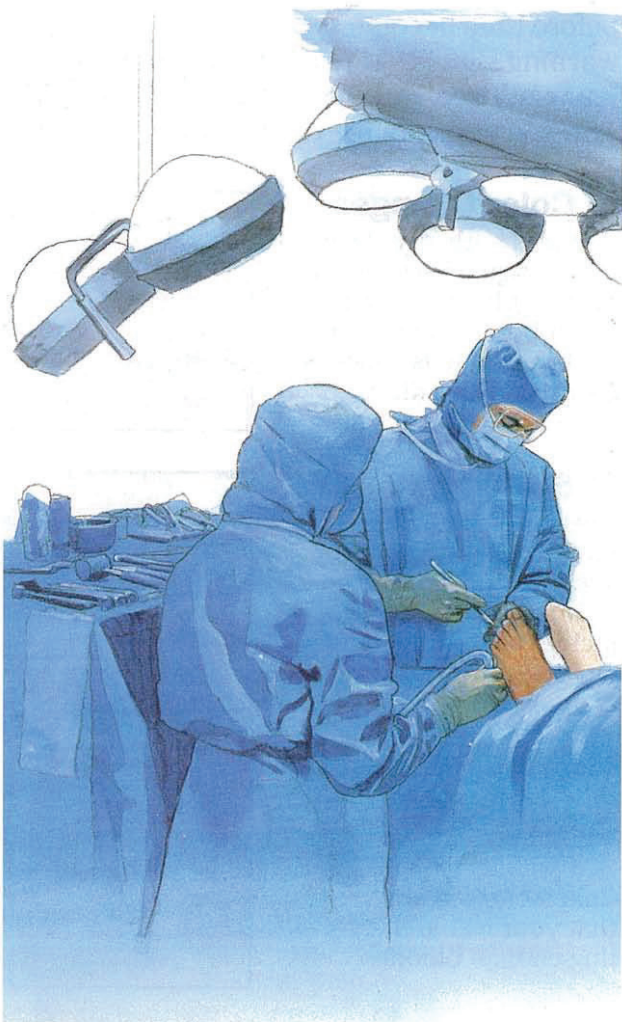
You may be hospitalised a week or longer depending on the severity and your recovery.

## Surgical Treatment

The goals of surgery are to remove the infection, halt its spread, and save as much of your foot or leg as possible. In addition, expect IV (intravenous) antibiotics to help control infection.

## Wound Care

Regular wound care after your foot surgery helps keep your foot free of infection and aids healing. Dressings are changed often—usually daily—to protect your foot from infection. Also, you may need to take special medication to help your foot heal more quickly.



**A home care nurse** may shorten your hospital stay by helping you change dressings or check your IV antibiotics at home.

# Self-Care: Inspecting Your Feet

Inspecting your feet helps you catch small skin irritations before they become serious infections. Check daily for these warning signs that could mean your feet are in trouble. If you can't see your feet ask a relative or friend to help. See your Podiatrist straight away if you find a problem.

## ❑ Colour Changes

Redness with streaks is often a sign of infection. Pale or blue tones may mean poor circulation. Darkened skin is a sign that tissue has died.



## Call your doctor immediately if you notice:

- redness or streaking
- swelling
- increased heat
- fever and chills

## ❑ Swelling

Swelling, sometimes with color changes, may be a sign of poor circulation or infection. Symptoms include tenderness and an increase in the size of your foot.



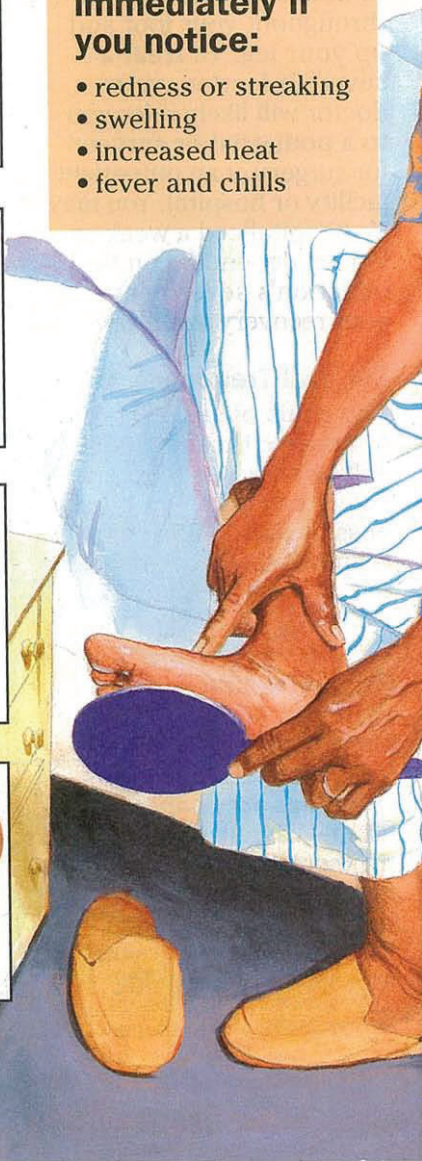
## ❑ Temperature Changes

Warm areas may mean that your feet are infected. Cold feet often are a sign that your feet aren't getting enough blood.



## ❑ Sensation Changes

Odd sensations like "pins and needles," numbness, tingling, burning, or lack of feeling may mean nerves are damaged.







A hand mirror is useful for checking the bottom of your feet.



### ❑ Hot Spots

Red “hot spots” are caused by friction or pressure. Hot spots can turn into blisters, corns (thick skin on toes), or calluses (thick skin on the bottom of the foot).



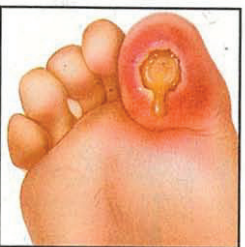
### ❑ Cracks, Sores, and Ulcers

Cracks and sores are caused by dry or irritated skin. They’re a sign that skin is breaking down, which could lead to ulcers.



### ❑ Ingrown Toenails

Ingrown toenails are often caused by tight-fitting shoes or incorrect nail trimming. Symptoms include nails that are growing into the skin, swelling, redness, or pain.



### ❑ Drainage and Odour

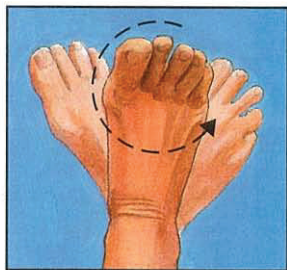
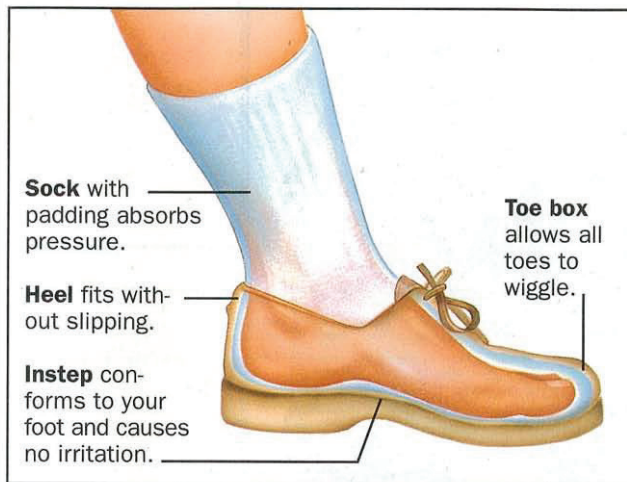
Drainage and odour may develop from untreated ulcers. White or yellow moisture, bleeding, and odour are often signs of infection or dead tissue.

# Self-Care: Keeping Your Feet Healthy

Keeping your feet healthy is a task you share with your health care team. One of the best ways to keep your feet in shape is to protect them with the right shoes and socks. What else? Do daily foot exercises, give your feet extra special care, and do what you can to control your diabetes.

## Check Shoes and Socks

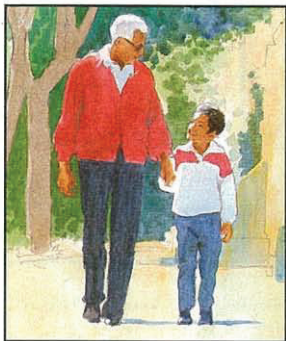
Shoes and socks that fit properly can prevent foot problems and keep existing problems from getting worse. Your Podiatrist can make sure your shoes and socks fit well. When shopping for shoes, check that the toe box is roomy enough so you can wiggle all your toes. Avoid open-toed or open-heeled shoes. Inspect your shoes and socks for anything that could rub against your feet.



## Exercise Your Feet

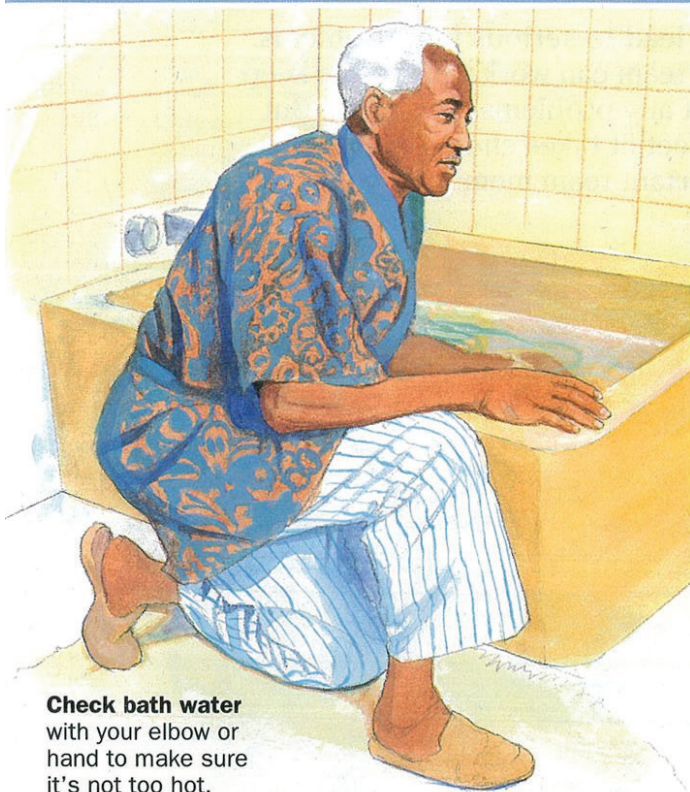
Exercising regularly can help the blood flow into and out of your feet and increase your flexibility. Special exercises for feet, as well as walking, swimming, and bicycling, are good types of exercise. Call your doctor if exercising is uncomfortable, or if you notice any warning signs such as redness, burning, or tenderness during or after exercise.

**Do your ABCs** with each foot by spelling out the alphabet in the air. Doing ABCs can increase blood flow and keep feet flexible.



**Walk frequently.** It's the best overall conditioner for your feet. Walking improves both your circulation and your general health.



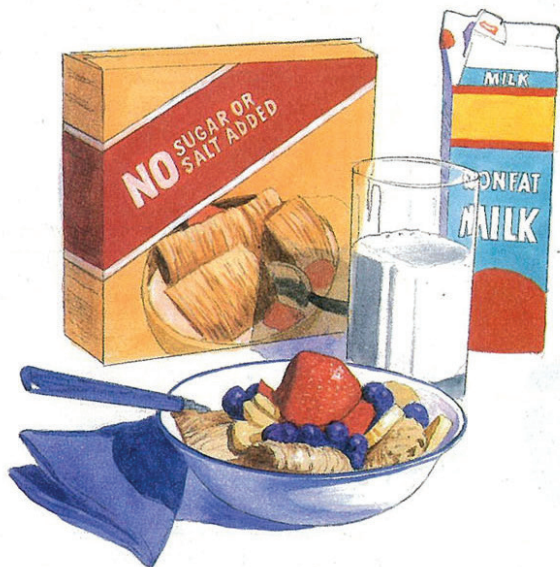


**Check bath water** with your elbow or hand to make sure it's not too hot.

## Take Special Care

The self-care tips below can help prevent foot problems.

- **Use warm water** and mild soap to wash your feet every day, but don't soak. Dry well.
- **Inspect your feet daily** for cracks, blisters, scratches, or dry skin. If your feet are dry or scaly, use moisturising cream.
- **Avoid heating pads and hot water bottles.** You could burn your feet.
- **Don't cross your legs.** It can reduce blood flow to your feet.
- **Don't use razors** or over-the-counter medications to treat corns and calluses. They could damage your feet.
- **Don't smoke,** since smoking can reduce blood flow to your feet.
- **Never walk barefoot.**

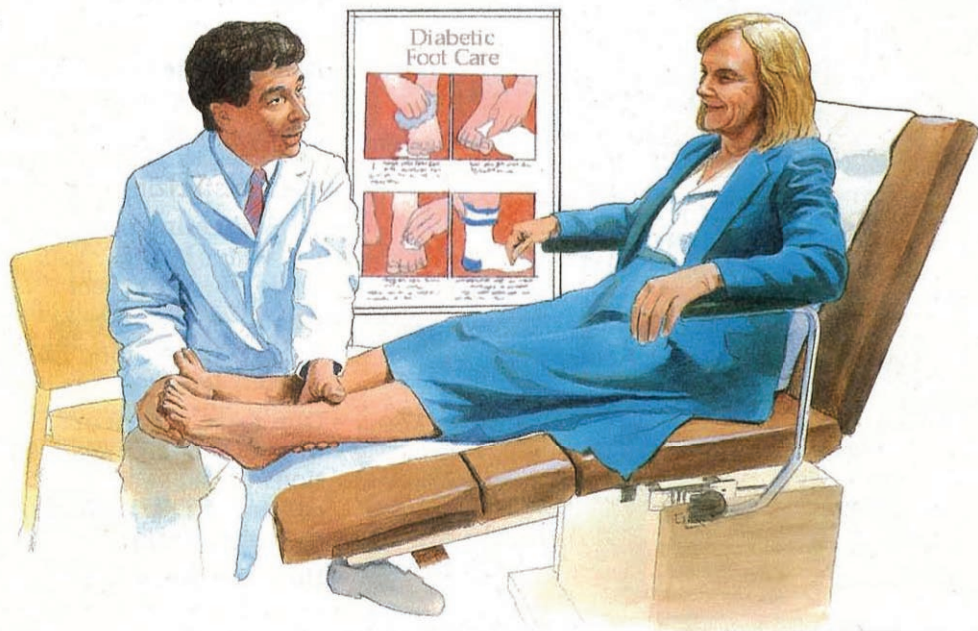


## Control Your Diabetes

A good foot care program includes controlling your diabetes. Eat low-fat, sugarless foods, monitor your blood sugar levels, take prescribed medications, and exercise daily. Regular checkups by your health care team can also help to control your diabetes.

## Keeping Your Feet Fit

Diabetes doesn't have to lead to serious foot problems. Your diabetic health care team can work with you to keep your feet healthy and treat any problems that occur. But remember, keeping your feet fit takes effort and commitment from the most important team member—you.



For more information call your Podiatrist:

**0800 436 686**



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