



DIABETES AND YOUR FEET

Diabetes is the leading cause of non-traumatic lower extremity amputations in the USA.

People with diabetes are at greater risk of complications, such as **diabetic neuropathy** and peripheral vascular diseases, which can ultimately lead to a foot ulcer. A foot ulcer is a very serious complication. In fact, 85% of patients who lost a limb had a foot ulcer first.

Though a **diabetes-related foot ulcer** can be anywhere on the foot, most occur on the ball of the foot or on the bottom of the toes. Once you develop an ulcer, it may take weeks or even months for it to heal.

Symptoms

You may be at risk for a foot ulcer if you have one or more of the following signs:

- Lack of sensation (feeling) in your feet
- Feeling of “pins and needles” in your feet
- Feet that hurt while walking or resting
- Stains on socks or shoes
- Sores that do not heal
- Skin on your feet becomes thick, dry or scaly
- Calluses on the feet or toes

Treatment and Care

Treatments for a diabetes-related foot ulcer will vary based on individuals, but may include:

- Improving blood glucose management
- Special dressings to absorb drainage
- Prevention and treatment of infection
- Appropriate offloading device (i.e., a special shoe, cast, wheelchair, etc.)
- Nutritional education (foods high in protein, vitamins and minerals are important to healing and maintaining healthy skin)

Neuropathy is a loss of feeling or numbness in limbs caused by nerve damage that most commonly originates in the hands or feet.



15-25%

**OF PEOPLE WITH
DIABETES DEVELOP
A FOOT SORE OR
ULCER.**

RISK FACTORS

- + Elevated blood sugar
- + Hypertension
- + Hypothyroidism
- + Alcoholism
- + Obesity
- + Smoking

Early intervention and proper treatment can help prevent complications and reduce your risk of amputation.

82%

**LOWERED RISK
OF AMPUTATION**

After a thorough evaluation at our center, which may include diagnostic testing, your wound care provider will discuss a treatment plan with you.

Your compliance with the plan of care is the single most important factor in your healing!

Diabetes can cause nerve damage that takes away feeling in the feet. Because diabetes-related foot ulcers are often painless, special care must be given to keep your feet healthy.



Check your feet daily. Look for blisters, cuts and scratches. Use a long-handled mirror or place a mirror on the floor to see the bottom of your feet. Always check between your toes.



Keep your feet clean. Wash daily and dry carefully – especially between the toes.



Moisturize your feet. Apply a moisturizer as recommended by your physician, but never apply between toes as that can lead to a fungal infection.



Do not walk barefoot. That includes on sandy beaches and pool/patio areas.



Wear properly fitted shoes. Shoes should be comfortable when purchased. Do not wear narrow, pointed toe or high-heeled shoes.



Inspect the inside of your shoes daily. Check for sharp objects, tears or rough areas on the inside of the shoe.



Do not wear shoes without socks or stockings. Wear clean, properly fitted socks. Moisture-wicking or diabetic socks are recommended.



Avoid temperature extremes. Test water temperature with your hand or elbow prior to bathing. Do not soak your feet in hot water or apply a hot water bottle. If your feet feel cold at night, wear socks.



Trim your toenails regularly. Always cut your nails straight across.



Do not use over-the-counter remedies for corns. See a podiatrist to have these evaluated.



Avoid crossing your legs. This causes pressure on the nerves and blood vessels, resulting in less blood flow to your feet.

Wound care is essential: Taking care of your wound is taking care of your health. To refer a patient or schedule an appointment, call:

IMPORTANT

If you notice any of the following symptoms, notify your provider immediately if you have:

- + A fever or flu-like symptoms with any redness, swelling or ulcer
- + An increase in leg/foot pain
- + Discolored drainage or a bad odor from an ulcer
- + Increased swelling of your foot/leg
- + Cold, pale, blue or increased numbness in your foot or leg

Sources

<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/data/statistics-report/index.html#print>
<https://diabetes.org/about-us/statistics/about-diabetes>