

diabetes & your feet

Looking after your diabetes and having regular checks will help to delay or even prevent the development of diabetes complications, including problems with your feet.

What is checked?

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| > Foot shape | > Feeling and reflexes (nerves) |
| > Toenails | > Blood flow to the feet (circulation) |
| > Footwear | > Skin – for dryness, calluses, corns, cracks or infections |

Who checks?

A doctor, registered podiatrist or credentialed diabetes educator will check your bare feet to assess whether your feet have a LOW or HIGH risk of developing more serious problems.

How do you know if you have LOW risk feet?

Low risk feet have normal sensation and good blood flow. There is also no previous history of foot ulceration or amputation.

How do you know if you have HIGH risk feet?

High risk feet have lost feeling (peripheral neuropathy) and have poor blood flow (peripheral vascular disease). People who have had a foot ulcer or amputation in the past have high risk feet. Feet with calluses or deformities like claw toes also have an increased risk if poor feeling and/or decreased blood flow are also present.

As well as the tips for foot care on page 2, people with HIGH risk feet must take special care to avoid further problems. They are advised to see a registered podiatrist with sound diabetes knowledge. In some cases, they may be referred to a specialist or high risk foot clinic.

Damage to the nerves and the blood supply of the feet caused by diabetes can put your feet at risk of damage. This damage is more likely if you have had diabetes for a long time, if blood glucose levels have been too high for too long, if you smoke or are inactive.



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Caring for your feet

In addition to regular checks with your podiatrist, it is important to get to know your feet and to check them every day. If you are unable to reach your feet, you can use a mirror or have someone check your feet for you.

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- > Attend education groups at a podiatry or diabetes centre to find out how to look after your feet (see page 4 for contact details).
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- > Have your feet checked twice a year by your doctor or diabetes health professional.
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- > Know your feet well – wash, dry and look at your feet every day, especially between your toes.
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- > Check for bruising, redness, splints and blisters.
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- > Get medical advice early if you notice any change or problem.
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- > Cut your toenails straight across – not into the corners and not too short. Gently file any sharp edges.
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- > If you can't see properly or reach your feet to cut your toenails, ask someone to do it for you.
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- > Use moisturisers to avoid dry skin – but not between your toes.
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- > Never use over-the-counter corn cures.
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- > Don't wear tight socks or knee high stockings or anything with prominent seams.
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- > Always have your feet measured when buying new shoes. Buy supportive shoes that fit well and have the right length (a thumb width longer than your longest toe), width and depth.
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- > Keep your feet away from direct heat such as heaters, hot water bottles and electric blankets. Instead, keep warm with slippers or socks.
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- > Always wear shoes.
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Keeping your diabetes under control

It is important to:

- > Check and record your blood glucose levels regularly.
- > Keep your blood glucose levels within your target range.
- > Keep your blood pressure within the normal range (less than or equal to 130/80).
- > Be physically active.[^]
- > Eat healthily.
- > DO NOT SMOKE!
- > Make and keep (or if necessary re-schedule) all appointments with your diabetes team.

Points to remember:

- > Low risk feet can become high risk feet without symptoms.
- > Knowing the risk and taking care of your feet can prevent amputation.
- > It is important to have a health professional check your feet at least twice a year.

More about podiatry

- > Some area health services and local councils offer subsidised podiatry services. Phone your local hospital, council or community health centre to find out more.
- > Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) gold card holders are entitled to free podiatry services from private podiatrists.
- > Private health funds may cover some podiatry services depending on the type and level of insurance.
- > The Australian Podiatry Association in your state will help you to find a podiatrist with specialised knowledge about diabetes.
- > A doctor can refer people with diabetes and serious foot problems (such as ulcers or neuropathy) to high risk foot clinics.

[^] Check with your doctor or podiatrist before embarking on any form of weight bearing activity.

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For further information contact

> The Australian Podiatry Association in your state or territory:

ACT & NSW	02 9698 3751	www.podiatry.asn.au
QLD	07 3371 5800	www.podiatryassociationqld.org.au
SA	08 8332 2755	www.podiatrysa.net.au
TAS	03 6344 2613	www.taspod.com
VIC	03 9286 1885	www.podiatryvic.com.au
WA	08 6389 0225	www.podiatrywa.com.au

> Australasian Podiatry Council website: www.apodc.com.au

- > You may also find it useful to visit the website of the Diabetes Ambulatory Care Centre at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney, NSW:
www.diabetes.usyd.edu.au

Would you like to join Australia's leading diabetes organisation?

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|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| > Dietary services | > Free magazines | > Children's services |
| > Educational literature | > Product discounts | > Support groups |

For more information phone **1300 136 588** or visit your State/Territory Organisation's website:

ACT	www.diabetes-act.com.au	NSW	www.australiandiabetescouncil.com
NT	www.healthylivingnt.org.au	QLD	www.diabetesqueensland.org.au
SA	www.diabetessa.com.au	TAS	www.diabetestas.com.au
VIC	www.diabetesvic.org.au	WA	www.diabeteswa.com.au

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Health professionals: For bulk copies of this resource, contact your Diabetes State/Territory Organisation as listed.