

Reduce your risk of a  
**serious foot problem**

Your foot check has  
shown you are at  
**high risk** of serious  
foot problems

# What being at risk means

When you are at high risk of serious foot problems the slightest cut or blister can lead to an ulcer or even an amputation.

When you've got diabetes, a serious problem can develop extremely quickly – sometimes in just a day – and needs emergency attention.

But together with your healthcare team there are lots of things you can do to look after your feet and prevent these serious problems from happening.

You should go through this booklet with your doctor, nurse or podiatrist.

## You will learn:

- why you're at high risk
- the extra care you should get
- the signs of a serious foot problem
- the emergency action you need to take if you have a problem
- everyday care of your feet
- who you should contact if you have any concerns.

# Why you're at high risk

Go through this checklist with your doctor, nurse, or podiatrist so you can understand why you're at high risk of a serious foot problem.

The person doing your foot check should tick the boxes which apply to you.



- ☐ You've lost some feeling in your feet.
- ☐ The blood flow (known as circulation) in your feet is reduced.
- ☐ You have hard skin or corns on your feet.
- ☐ The shape of your feet has changed.
- ☐ You have problems with your vision.
- ☐ You cannot look after your feet by yourself.
- ☐ You've had foot ulcers before.
- ☐ You've had an amputation to part of your foot or leg.

# The extra care you should get

As you are at high risk of a serious foot problem you should be referred to a foot protection team or specialist podiatrist.

They will work with you to agree a personalised care plan to take care of your feet.

This may involve treatment, advice about the best footwear and how to look after your feet. You'll see them regularly and this will be arranged through your local footcare service.

Write down their contact details on page 12 of this booklet so you can speak to them immediately if you spot a potential problem.



# Signs of a serious foot problem

A serious foot problem needs urgent attention so being able to spot any problems quickly is vital. Checking your feet every day will help you do this.

If you're not able to look at your feet, ask a member of your family, a friend or a carer to do this with you. Using a mirror can also help.

## **If you spot any of the following changes, you need to see your GP:**

- tingling sensation or pins and needles (like numbness)
- pain (burning)
- a dull ache
- shiny, smooth skin on your feet
- hair loss on your legs and feet
- loss of feeling in your feet or legs
- swollen feet
- your feet don't sweat
- wounds or sores that don't heal
- cramp in your calves when resting or walking.

**If you notice any of these changes, see your local foot team urgently:**

- changes in the colour and shape of your feet
- cold or hot feet
- blisters and cuts you didn't know were there
- a foul smell coming from an open wound.



**If you notice any changes or you feel unwell, do something about it straight away.**

# What to do if you think you have a serious foot problem



**If you see something wrong or are concerned by your feet then you need to act immediately.**

## **As soon as you spot something you need to:**

- take the weight off your foot
- contact your GP or foot protection team immediately
- go to your nearest out-of-hours healthcare service if your GP or foot protection team aren't available.



It's really important to try and sort it out before it gets any worse – no matter how small the change. A serious foot problem for some people can be a medical emergency that needs attention.

You will reduce your risk of an ulcer or an amputation by acting quickly.

You may be looked after by many different healthcare professionals, known in the NHS as a multidisciplinary footcare team. They will tell you what to do next.

The important thing to remember is to keep the weight off your foot.

**Never ignore a foot problem or wait to see if it heals on its own.**

# Tips to prevent serious foot problems

-  Get help to quit smoking. Smoking makes it harder for your blood to flow around your body, especially your feet.
-  Lowering your blood sugar levels, cholesterol and blood pressure will reduce your risk of serious foot problems.
-  Check your feet every day or get someone to help you to do it. Be especially careful if you lose feeling in your feet – you won't know if you've hurt yourself.
-  Eat a healthy balanced diet and stay active. This will help you manage your diabetes.
-  Look after your toenails.

6



Wear well-fitting shoes and socks that protect, support and don't rub.

7



Use moisturising cream on your feet every day.

8



Don't use blades to remove tough skin or corn plasters.

9



Make sure you've been referred to a foot specialist for expert advice and go to every foot appointment.

10



Keep useful numbers handy – know who to call and what to do if you have any problems with your feet.

# Who to contact

Fill this page in with your doctor or nurse so you know who to call as soon as you spot any problems with your feet.

Tear the page off and stick it on your fridge or somewhere it's easy to see.



## GP

GP surgery: \_\_\_\_\_

GP name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

## Podiatrist or foot protection team

Named contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## Out-of-hours healthcare service

If your GP or foot protection team aren't available go to your nearest out-of-hours healthcare service.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

You can reduce  
your risk of an ulcer  
or amputation by  
always taking action  
as soon as you spot  
any problems with  
your feet.

**If the thought of serious foot problems  
is worrying you, we can support you.**

**Call** 0345 123 2399\*

**Email** [helpline@diabetes.org.uk](mailto:helpline@diabetes.org.uk)

**Go to** [www.diabetes.org.uk/helpline](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/helpline)

\*Calls may be recorded for quality and training purposes.

The British Diabetic Association operating as Diabetes UK, a charity registered  
in England and Wales (no. 215199) and in Scotland (no. SC039136).

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## Taking care of your feet

Keep this card in your wallet or purse so you can call for help as soon as you spot a serious foot problem.

## Get help quickly

If you do spot any problems take the weight off your feet straight away and call your GP, podiatrist or foot protection team.

**GP name and telephone number**

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**Podiatrist or foot protection team**

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**Out-of-hours healthcare service**

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