

# Diabetes

## and your feet

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.

### What is checked?

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

### Who checks?

A doctor, podiatrist or nurse will carry out this easy and painless check on 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.

### How do you know if you have HIGH risk feet?

High risk feet have lost feeling (peripheral neuropathy) and 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 increased risk if poor feeling and/or decreased blood flow are also present.

As well as following 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 podiatrist with sound diabetes knowledge and in some cases may be referred to a specialist or high risk foot clinic.

The booklet “Healthy Feet are Happy Feet” is available from Diabetes Australia and is written especially for people with high risk feet.

Whether you have low or high risk feet, it is important to look after them (see page 2).

### Caring for your feet

- Attend education groups at a podiatry or diabetes centre to find out how to look after your feet (see page 4 for contact details).
- Have your feet checked twice a year by your doctor or diabetes health professional.
- Know your feet well - wash, dry and look at your feet every day.
- Get medical advice early if you notice any change or problem.
- Cut your toenails straight across - not into the corners - and gently file any sharp edges.
- If you can't properly see or reach your feet to cut your toenails, ask someone to do it for you.
- Use moisturisers to avoid dry skin.
- Never use over-the-counter corn cures.
- Don't wear tight socks or stockings.
- Buy supportive shoes that fit well - the right length (a thumb width longer than your longest toe), width and depth.
- Keep your feet away from direct heat such as heaters, hot water bottles and electric blankets.

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## Keep your diabetes under control

Remember that looking after your diabetes will help to delay or even prevent the development of diabetes complications, including problems with your feet.

### It is important to:

- check and record your blood glucose levels regularly
- keep your blood glucose levels within the recommended range (usually 4-8mmol/L)
- be physically active\*
- eat healthily
- DO NOT SMOKE!
- make and keep (or re-schedule) all appointments with your diabetes team.

*\*Check with your doctor or podiatrist before embarking on any form of weight bearing activity.*

### Points to remember:

- Low risk feet can become high risk feet without symptoms.
- Knowing the risk and taking care of your feet prevents amputation.
- It is important to have a professional foot check at least once 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 cover some podiatry services.
- The 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.



## Diabetes and your feet continued

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### For further information contact:

#### Your State Podiatry Association

NSW: 02 9698 3751                      TAS: 03 6344 2613

SA: 08 8363 4144                      VIC: 03 9866 5906

QLD: 07 3371 5800                      WA: 08 6389 0225

Website: [www.podiatry.asn.au](http://www.podiatry.asn.au)

**Australasian Podiatry Council Website:** [www.apodc.com.au](http://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](http://www.diabetes.usyd.edu.au)

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

- Product discounts
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**For more information phone 1300 136 588**

**Website: [www.diabetesaustralia.com.au](http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au)**

**Multilingual information: [www.multilingualdiabetes.org.au](http://www.multilingualdiabetes.org.au)**

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