

## Caring For Your Feet

### How does diabetes affect my feet?

Diabetes can damage the blood vessels and nerves that run throughout your body—especially if your blood sugar levels are higher than normal. Damaged blood vessels can limit the flow of blood to your feet. Damaged nerves can cause you to lose feeling in your feet. Diabetes can also reduce your body's ability to fight infection. Because of these changes, minor foot injuries (such as blisters or calluses) can become more serious foot infections or ulcers.

### How can I take care of my feet?

#### **Every Day**

- Check your feet for cuts, cracks, bruises, blisters, sores, infections, unusual marks, swelling, redness, or pain. To get a good look at the bottom of your feet, use a mirror or ask a family member to check.
- Wash your feet with warm (not hot) water. Gently dry your feet, especially between the toes.
- Apply a thin coat of good skin lotion on your heels and soles—but NOT between your toes. Wipe off any excess lotion.
- Wear clean, soft socks and good, supportive shoes (see Buying Shoes below).

#### **Other Steps**

- Trim your nails straight across.
- Clean any cuts or scratches with a mild soap and water, and cover with a dry dressing for sensitive skin.
- If your toes rub each other, put lamb's wool in between them.
- Avoid extreme cold and heat (including the sun).
- Visit a foot care specialist for advice and information.

#### **Buying Shoes**

- Always buy "good shoes" from a reputable shoe store: properly measured and fitted, low heels (under 5 cm/2 inches high), adequate room for toes, no interior stitching that rubs, no slipping of heel in shoe. Whenever possible, have them professionally fitted.
- Buy shoes in the late afternoon, since your feet are slightly swollen by then.

### What should I AVOID doing?

- Don't use sharp objects to remove corns, calluses, in-growing toenails, or slivers. (See your doctor or foot care specialist.)
- Don't use over-the-counter medications to treat corns and warts.
- Don't apply heat to your feet with a hot water bottle, electric blanket, or heater. You could burn your feet without realizing it.
- Don't soak your feet or take very hot baths. (Check water temperature with your hand first.)
- Never walk barefoot indoors or outdoors.
- Don't wear anything that might limit blood flow to your lower legs (e.g., tight socks, elastics, or knee-highs).
- Don't wear over-the-counter insoles (which can cause blisters if they're not right for your feet).
- Don't sit for long periods of time, especially with your legs crossed.

**Remember—Exercising regularly and keeping blood sugars in a good range are important for your feet, too!**

For more information: Canadian Diabetes Association 1-800-226-8464—[www.diabetes.ca](http://www.diabetes.ca)  
American Diabetes Association 1-800-342-2383—[www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

Adapted from: Canadian Diabetes Association and Diabetes and your Body - How to take care of your eyes and feet. Ask Your Family Doctor, <http://www.cfpc.ca/English/cfpc/programs/patient%20education/diabetes%20feet/default.asp?s=1>

