

Penn State

Institute for Diabetes & Obesity

Diabetes can cause less blood flow and less feeling in the feet than in other parts of the body. Injuries such as cuts and scrapes and pressure from tight shoes may go unnoticed. Infection may start quickly, and open areas on the feet are slower to heal. The risk of developing serious foot problems can be greatly reduced by following some general guidelines.

Smoking

- Do not smoke. Nicotine shrinks the blood vessels and slows the blood flow to the feet.

Washing your feet

- Wash your feet daily with warm water, never hot, and a mild soap without perfume or deodorant. Always test the water temperature first with your elbow.
- Pat your feet dry, especially between your toes. If your feet are dry, apply a moisturizer that does not contain alcohol or perfume. Do not put the cream between your toes.
- Do not soak your feet.

Inspecting your feet

- Inspect your feet daily looking for cracks, open areas, warm areas, corns, and calluses.
- Never use a razor, a knife, or corn remedies. Never pull off dead skin because healthy skin will also be torn. A minor cut can lead to a serious infection.
- During foot inspections, look for the following:
 - Red marks, especially on toe tops and sides of the foot;
 - Discolored areas;
 - Blisters or open areas;
 - Darkened spot under a callus.

If any of these conditions are found, do not wear the shoe that caused them. Your doctor should check your feet on every visit. Yearly a monofilament test should be done.

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Trimming your toenails

- Toenails should be trimmed about once a month, straight across and even with the ends of the toes. Be very careful to avoid cutting the skin.
- If your vision is poor or your nails are difficult to cut, have a professional do your nail care.
- Some insurance companies will cover a Podiatrist's (Foot Doctor) visit.

If your feet are cold at night

- If your feet are cold at night, wear loose-fitting socks to bed. Never use a heating pad or hot water bottle.

See Your Physician Immediately for Any Foot Problems.

FOOTWEAR

General

- Wear shoes or slippers at all times. **Never** go barefoot.
- If possible, change your footwear every 4-6 hours.
- Avoid garters, socks with holes or mends, pointed or open toed shoes, sandals or thongs.
- Inspect and feel the inside of your shoes before putting them on. Look for foreign objects, nail points and rough areas.
- Plan ahead. Purchase new shoes before the old ones wear out.

Socks

- Always wear socks with shoes.
- Wear cotton or wool socks without elastic.

Buying New Shoes

- **Always** have your feet measured **every time** you buy shoes.
- The shoes should be 1/4" wider than your foot at the ball of your foot. The shoes should be 1/2" longer than your longest toe.
- Shoes should be comfortable when purchased. Don't depend on them to stretch out.

Breaking in New Shoes

- Wear your new shoes for less than 2 hours per day for the first week. Gradually increase the time you wear the new shoes by 1 hour a day. If you must wear new shoes longer because the old ones were causing problems, then be sure to remove shoes and socks every two hours and inspect your feet.
- Inspect your feet after removing the new shoes.