

A guide for patients about

the risk of foot problems when you have diabetes

Your foot screening assessment has shown that you have an increased or high risk of developing foot problems.

This is because you have one or more of the following risk factors:

- you have lost some feeling in your feet (neuropathy)
- the circulation in your feet is reduced (ischaemia)
- you have hard skin or corns which could damage your skin
- your foot shape is more likely to cause rubs
- your eyesight is impaired
- you have difficulty looking after your own feet
- you have previously had a foot ulcer (poor healing wound)
- you have had an amputation.

Diabetes can cause poor blood supply, poor feeling and a poor immune system. A loss of feeling in your feet can mean that an injury, damaged skin or infection is not noticed.

A good blood supply and immune system are important for injuries to heal. A poor blood supply and immune system may mean injuries and infection take longer to heal or even result in gangrene or amputation.

Infection can spread rapidly. Early detection and appropriate treatment of damaged skin, infection and ulcers can help resolve the problem as quickly as possible.

Looking after your feet

As your feet are at greater risk due to your diabetic complications you will need to take extra care of them.

Check your feet every day

You should look for any breaks in the skin, blisters, change of colour (especially under hard skin), or signs of infection such as swelling, redness, heat or pain. Remember to check the heels and between the toes. A mirror can be helpful or, if you have difficulty, ask a friend, relative or carer to help.

First aid

If you discover any cuts or blisters clean them with fresh water, cover with a sterile dressing and contact your nurse, doctor or Podiatry Service. If they are not available, go to your local minor injury unit or accident and emergency department. Remember any delay in getting advice or treatment can lead to more serious problems.

Wash your feet every day

Use warm water with mild soap. Check the water temperature with your elbow as you may not feel hot and cold very well with your feet or hands. Do not soak your feet for a long time as this can damage the skin.

Dry feet carefully, especially between the toes.

Care for your skin

If the skin is too dry, it could crack. Apply moisturising cream every day but avoid the areas between your toes. If the skin between your toes is too moist it could split and cause an open wound where infection can enter.

Hard skin and corns

Never treat corns and callus yourself with sharp blades, corn plasters, hard skin removing creams or ointments. These can cause injury. Your podiatrist will provide treatment and advice where necessary.

Toenails

It may not be suitable for you to cut your own toenails. Your podiatrist will provide treatment and advice where necessary.

Socks, stockings and tights

You should change socks, stockings and tights every day. They should not have bulky seams, holes or darned patches as these may rub. Any hosiery should not be too tight as this may reduce blood flow.

Avoid walking barefoot at anytime

If you walk bare foot you risk injuring your feet without noticing it, by stubbing your toes or standing on sharp objects which can damage the skin.

Footwear

Badly fitting footwear can rub and cause damage. Seek advice from the podiatrist as to what footwear is best for you. Always check inside your footwear for uneven lining or grit. Check to see if nails or pins have gone through the sole as you may not feel them with your feet. Wear new footwear at home for a while and make sure they haven't rubbed your skin.

Cold feet

Exercise helps warm the feet, even just moving your feet around and wiggling the toes. Insulate your feet with natural fibre socks like wool or cotton. Never warm your feet in front of a fire or radiator. Remove hot water bottles or heating pads from your bed before getting in as they may burn your feet without you noticing.

Smoking

If you smoke, it can increase the risk of developing foot problems. If you would like to quit, contact our Stop Smoking Service.

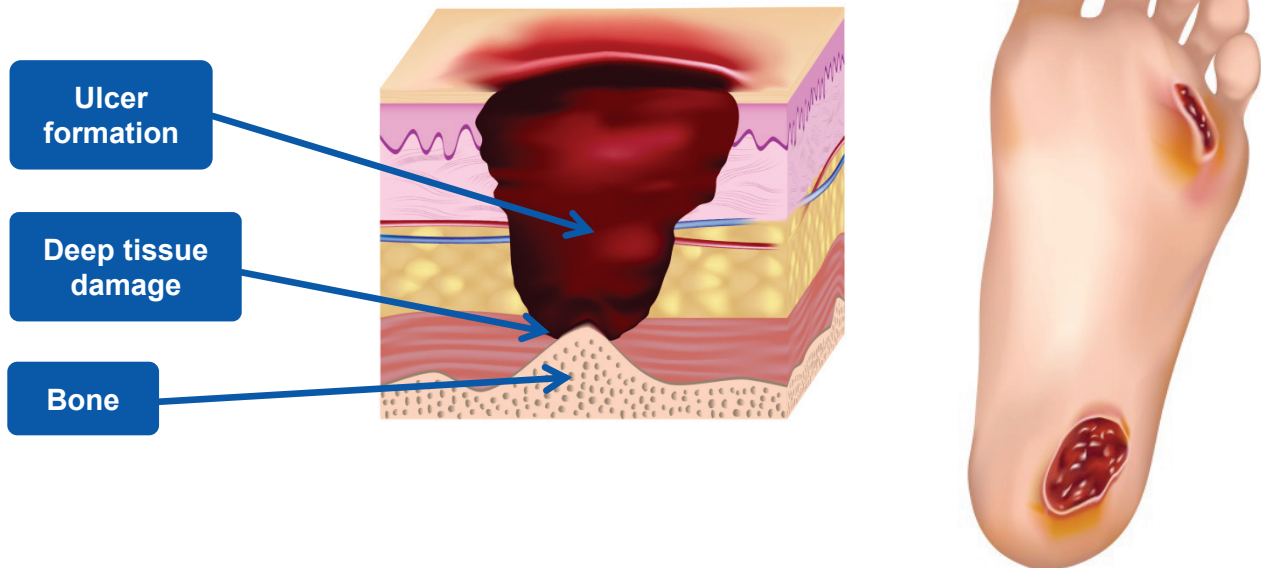
Phone 0300 123 1220

Fill in our online form at www.kentcht.nhs.uk/stopsmoking

Text 'quit' to 87023

What to look out for

Hard skin which can lead to deep tissue damage meaning the skin breaks down and an ulcer forms. The ulcer and foot may become infected. Your foot may be red, swollen or sore. Not everyone gets problems with their feet but it is important to check your feet daily and if you discover any problems contact your GP or local podiatry clinic.



Contact us

Phone 0300 123 6756, Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm.

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kchft.podiatryskc@nhs.net

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Press 3 for Gravesend and Sittingbourne (children only)

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Do you have feedback about our health services?



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