

How does diabetes affect the feet

The foot is affected by diabetes by:

- ▶ Impaired blood supply
- ▶ Impaired nerve supply
- ▶ Infections

To keep your feet healthy requires a good blood flow and nerve supply.

The blood vessels provide energy to working muscles and aids in healing. The nerves send messages to and from the brain in response to stimuli. These stimuli enable the foot to distinguish between sensations such as hot and cold, sharp and blunt, vibration, pain and pressure. Sometimes over a period of time diabetes may affect this healthy system. The blood vessels become narrower reducing the blood flow to the feet. The nerves may not relay messages back to the brain and this is known as peripheral neuropathy.

Infections develop more easily and because of the reduced blood flow healing is slower:

FOOT FACTS

- ▶ Every 30 seconds a leg is lost to diabetes somewhere in the world
- ▶ Up to 70% of all leg amputations happen in people with diabetes
- ▶ Most amputations begin with a foot ulcer
- ▶ **In most cases diabetic foot ulcers and amputations can be prevented. Up to 85% of amputations could be avoided**
- ▶ Foot problems are the most common cause of admission to hospital for people with diabetes
- ▶ Good diabetic control and well informed self care can significantly reduce foot problems



If you can't check your own feet daily, have some-one else take a look

THINGS YOU SHOULD DO

- ▶ Check feet daily for cuts, blisters, bruises or colour changes, swelling and open sores. Report them to your healthcare worker without delay
- ▶ Use a mirror to see the soles of your feet or ask someone to check them for you. Always protect your feet. Wear suitable footwear inside and outside the home
- ▶ Check inside your shoes for any sharp objects and rough edges
- ▶ Always wash feet with soap and water. Take care to wash in-between the toes. Dry feet carefully, especially between the toes
- ▶ Apply moisturiser to feet daily
- ▶ Cut toe nails straight across and file rough edges
- ▶ Keep wounds covered with a dry dressing
- ▶ Have feet checked by a Podiatrist periodically