



About Podiatrists

Podiatrists are highly-skilled health professionals trained to deal with the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of medical and surgical conditions of the feet and lower limbs. Podiatrists currently complete a Bachelor of Podiatry or higher degree and are continually upgrading their skills and knowledge through further education and training.

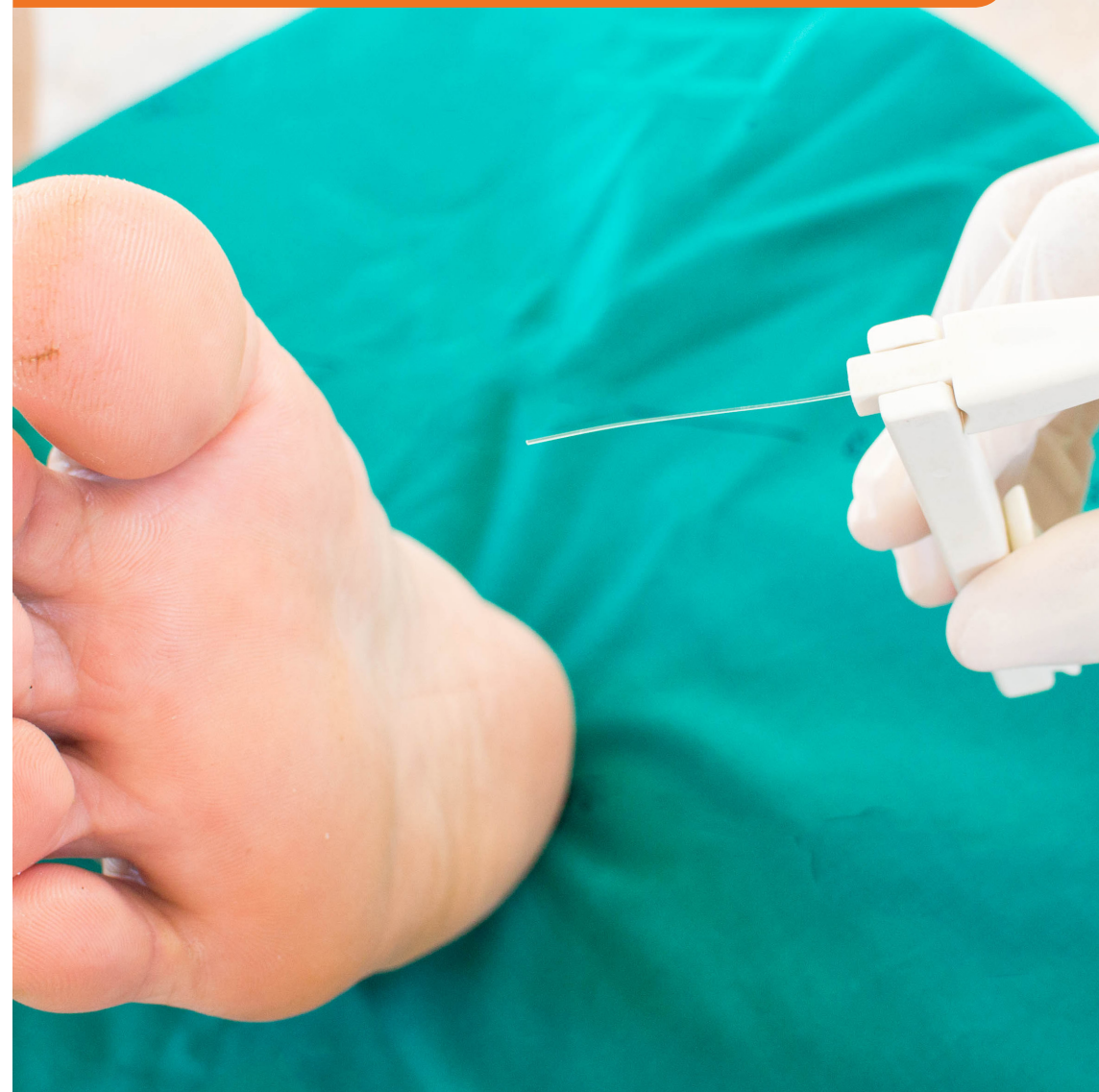
Where can I find a podiatrist?

Contact the **Australasian Podiatry Council** on **(03) 9416 3111** or visit **www.findapodiatrist.org** and follow the relevant links.

Many health funds in Australia provide for podiatry services on their ancillary tables. Government-funded services are available through the Department of Veterans' Affairs, some public hospitals and community health centres. People with a chronic disease eg diabetes may be eligible for a Medicare rebate if a care plan is established through a GP.



Focus on Diabetes



A foot health message from your podiatrist

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition in which the amount of glucose (sugar) in the blood is too high because the body is unable to use it properly. This is because insulin is lacking, or the body's way of converting glucose into energy is not working properly

There are two common types of diabetes

Type 1, which usually starts in children and young adults. People with this type of diabetes require daily insulin injections.

Type 2, which is the most common type of diabetes and usually affects people over the age of 40.

How diabetes can affect your feet

Your feet are supplied with blood to keep them healthy. They also have lots of nerves as a warning system. For example, if you have a stone in your shoe, nerves will send a message to your brain. However, if your diabetes is poorly controlled for a long period of time, this may lead to:

- Nerve damage, which reduces feeling in the feet and is called peripheral neuropathy, and/or
- Poor circulation, which is called peripheral vascular disease.

Nerve damage may mean that you no longer notice the stone in your shoe, due to loss of feeling in your feet. This could then lead to an injury or wound you can't feel, and possibly an infection.

If you have poor circulation, any injuries, wounds or infections to your feet (eg cuts, burns or scratches) will take longer to heal. This is due to less blood flowing into your feet.

Blood provides energy to muscles and aids in healing any tissue damage.



If you have nerve damage or poor circulation, you will need to take extra care to protect your feet from injury and wounds.

Many foot problems in people who have diabetes occur when injuries and wounds – and often infections – go unnoticed and untreated, or when healing is delayed due to poor circulation.

How can I detect any changes early?

A yearly checkup by your podiatrist will help to detect any changes early – before they become a problem. Your podiatrist will examine your circulation by feeling foot pulses. They will also examine your nerve sensation by testing pressure sensitivity, vibration and/or reflexes, and other tests may be considered necessary.

Your podiatrist will also look for general foot conditions which may lead to future problems. They will work with you to show you how to monitor your own feet in between consultations.

If your podiatrist finds you have nerve damage, poor circulation, a wound or infection, you will need more frequent care in the form of a tailored care plan.

To prevent problems

- Protect your feet from injury
- Inspect your feet every day (your podiatrist can show you how)
- See your podiatrist immediately if something is not healing or you find a red swollen area.

Footwear advice

The best type of footwear fits well and protects your feet. Wherever possible, wear shoes to avoid injury.

Some other pointers

- Where possible, wear lace-up shoes which are deep and broad enough, especially at the toes.
- Check inside your shoes for rough edges or exposed tacks - shake them out to make sure there is nothing inside.
- Cotton hosiery, socks and tights, worn with leather upper shoes are good choices.

As a general guide

- Maintain acceptable blood sugar level control
- Don't smoke
- Exercise regularly
- Avoid walking barefoot
- Keep your feet clean
- Wear well-fitting shoes
- Cut and file nails carefully
- Have corns, calluses and other foot problems treated by a podiatrist
- Seek your podiatrist's advice if you have any foot concerns

Remember

- With nerve damage or altered sensation you may experience numbness in your feet. Cuts, blisters, ingrown toenails and corns may go unnoticed.
- Reduced blood supply (poor circulation) can slow down the healing process.
- **PROTECT** your feet from injury.
- **INSPECT** your feet everyday.
- Have a **REGULAR** foot assessment at least annually.

