

# Diabetes & Your Feet



## 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 process it properly. This is because the body's method of converting glucose into energy is not working as it should.

## How can diabetes affect my feet?

- **Blood supply:** diabetes can affect your arteries which carry blood to your feet. If your arteries are affected, this will result in a decreased blood supply to your feet which will impede your ability to heal and will increase your risk of infection. It may also result in pain or cramps in your feet or legs.
- **Nerves:** diabetes can affect the nerves in your feet. Symptoms include numbness, pins and needles, tingling and burning sensations. This may affect your whole feet or just certain areas. If your feet are affected, this will impede your ability to detect any injury to your feet including cuts, blisters etc. Neurological changes in your feet can also result in permanent discomfort in your feet.

## What do I need to do to look after my feet?

- Check your feet daily for any problems or changes. Look for any blisters, cuts or cracks. If you notice anything, keep it clean and apply antiseptic such as betadine. Monitor closely for signs of infection (redness, pus, swelling, pain) and see your GP if you think it may be infected; you may require antibiotics
- Dry your feet thoroughly, especially between your toes
- Apply some moisturiser or heel balm to your feet daily. Do not put anything between the toes – this includes powder

- Always wear shoes when you are outside to protect your feet
- Wear well fitting shoes. These should be lace-up with a wide and deep toe box and a deep and firm heel counter. Your podiatrist will be happy to make recommendations.
- Have your corns or callouses treated by a podiatrist. Never use corn pads
- Cut and file your nails carefully
- Exercise regularly, eat well and quit smoking

## You are at a higher risk of foot complications if:

- You have had diabetes for a long time
- Your blood glucose levels are often high, and have been so for an extended time
- You smoke, are inactive and lead an unhealthy lifestyle

## What can a podiatrist do?

It is essential that every person with diabetes sees a podiatrist at least once a year. They will help to detect any changes early before they become a problem by completing a regular assessment of your circulation and sensation. Your podiatrist will also look for general foot conditions that may lead to future problems and discuss with you how to monitor and look after your feet yourself.

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If you have any questions regarding any of the above information please feel free to contact Rachael at Pod Co Podiatry

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