**About diabetes**

Diabetes is for life. It can be diagnosed at any age.

Nerves and blood vessels supplying your feet can be damaged. This can affect:

* The feeling in your feet (neuropathy)
* Circulation supplying your feet (ischemia)

Changes to your feet can take a long time to show themselves and can go unnoticed. It is therefore very important that you check your feet regularly, and attend your annual diabetic foot check.

**You have a high risk that you will develop foot ulcers.** Your podiatrist will tick which of the following risk factors you have:

* You have lost some feeling in your feet
* The circulation in your feet is reduced
* You have hard skin on your feet
* The shape of your foot has changed
* Your vision is impaired
* You cannot look after your feet yourself
* You smoke
* You have had ulcers before
* You have had an amputation

**You can reduce the risk of developing foot problems by having your feet checked annually by your practise nurse, diabetic nurse, GP or podiatrist, as well as controlling your diabetes, cholesterol, and blood pressure.**

**If you smoke, we encourage you to stop.** Smoking affects circulation which can lead to amputation.

Following the advice in this leaflet, will reduce the risks of you developing a foot ulcer, and other compilations in future.

**Keeping your feet healthy**

Check your feet every day

* Look for signs of blisters, breaks in the skin, signs of infection such as pain, swelling and redness, corns and callus. Use a mirror or ask a friend help you.

Wash your feet everyday

* Use warm water and a little soap. This will also help you check for any changes to your feet or your skin. Dry your feet well, especially between the toes. If you find that they remain wet even after drying, apply a little surgical spirit. This will help dry them out. Test the temperature of the water beforehand.

Moisturise your feet everyday

* Most diabetics suffer from dry skin; apply a little moisturiser avoiding the areas in between your toes.

Toenails

* Do not cut your toenails, instead file them.

Socks, stockings and tights

* Change your socks, stockings or tights every day. They should not be too tight, or have bulky seams.

Avoid walking barefoot

* You can injure yourself by stubbing your toes or standing on sharp objects causing damage.

Check your shoes

* Check the inside and out sides of your shoes with your hand for anything that could have fallen inside, or be stuck on the outside such as a nail, pin or glass.

Badly-fitting shoes

* Check the inside of your shoes before purchasing them for any seams that may rub against your skin. Poorly fitting shoes that are either too tight or not supportive enough are a common cause of foot problems.
* Your podiatrist may suggest you have special shoes made for you on prescription.

Prescription shoes and orthotics

* If you have prescription shoes or orthotics, you must follow the advice given to you by the Orthotist or podiatrist.
* These should be the only shoes you wear.
* Orthotics should be worn in all your shoes. Repairs on either the shoes or orthotics should only be carried out by the department that made them.

Minor cuts and blisters

* Cover cuts or blisters with a sterile dressing.
* Contact your GP or podiatry team immediately.
* If you cannot get through to them, go to the nearest A&E or walk-in centre.

Hard skin and corns

* Hard skin can cause discomfort and pain.
* Do not use over the counter corn treatment as this can cause damage to the skin, and lead to ulcers.
* Do not try removing the corn or callus yourself.
* Do make an appointment with your podiatry team for it to be removed.

Avoid high and low temperatures

* Never sit with your feet in front of the fire, or radiator.
* Wear socks if your feet are cold.
* Remove all hot water bottles and heating pads from your bed before getting in.

**History of ulcers?**

If you have had an amputation or ulcer before, you are at a high risk of developing more foot problems. If you take care of your feet and attend regular podiatry treatment, you will reduce this risk.

If you are worried contact your GP or Podiatrist.

**Podiatry Services**

Carfax Street Health Centre, Carfax Street, Swindon, SN1 1ED

Podiatry reception: 01793 463810

Main reception: 01793 486991

**Osprey Outpatients Department**

Great Western Hospital, NHS Foundation Trust, Marlborough Road, SN3 6BB

**This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email** **patient.information@gwh.nhs.uk**

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