

Preventing Complications with Diabetes: Check your Feet!

Am I at more risk for foot problems with diabetes?

All patients with diabetes are at a higher risk for complications related to their feet. Healthy foot hygiene and managing blood sugar can help prevent long-term complications. Your diabetes health care provider will check your feet at your appointments.



What do I need to do to care for my feet with diabetes?

- Maintain optimal blood sugar control.
- Wash and inspect your feet daily. Look for cuts, blisters, bruises, or swelling.
- Cut toenails to prevent ingrown toenails.
 - Cut toenails straight across with a toe nail clipper. Cutting into corners can cause ingrown nails.
- Wear properly fitting socks and shoes.
 - Replace shoes that cause any blisters, pain, or calluses on feet.
- Avoid walking outside on sidewalk or street without shoes.
- Avoid extreme temperatures
- Avoid soaking feet in water for long periods

Why is proper foot hygiene necessary?

Poor glucose control and improper foot care can lead to problems with delayed wound healing and peripheral neuropathy. Neuropathy is damage to your nerves that control sensation and touch. If you have neuropathy, you are less likely to feel if you have a problem on your foot. It is very important to inspect your feet daily.

Who should I tell if I am having problems with my feet?

- It is important to contact your healthcare provider. The longer a problem goes untreated, the more problems it could cause. Call a podiatrist to have your feet examined.
- Talk to your diabetes health care provider if you have:
 - Tingling, burning, or pain in feet or legs such as “pins and needles”
- Talk to your pediatrician or primary care provider if you have:
 - Pain, swelling, or drainage around the toenail
 - Dry, red, itchy rash on your feet
 - Warts, corns, or calluses



Dental Health

Children with diabetes have an increased risk of gum disease if they have poor blood sugar management. **High blood sugars lead to less saliva which help germs (bacteria) grow.** A sticky film of germs called plaque can build up on your teeth. When this happens you can get cavities and/or red, swollen gums that may bleed when you brush your teeth.

Tips for healthy teeth and gums:

- Brush all teeth twice daily for about 2 to 3 minutes.
- Use a brush with soft bristles with rounded ends.
- Angle brush against the gum line.
- Move brush back and forth in short strokes. Use a gentle, scrubbing motion.
- Brush outside surfaces of teeth including backs of teeth and chewing surfaces.
- Get a new toothbrush when bristles are worn or bent, about every 3 to 4 months.
- Flossing cleans between your teeth where your brush can't reach.
- Floss once daily.
- Diet soda is acidic and damages tooth enamel. **Water is best.**
- Food and drink used to treat low blood sugars have high sugar content. **Teeth should be brushed or at least wiped off after treating a low, especially at night.**



Age Range		Total cups of water/day
4-8 years old	Girls and Boys	7
9-13	Girls	9
	Boys	10
14-18	Girls	10
	Boys	14

Reminders

- Notify your dentist that you have diabetes.
- Schedule appointments with your dentist every 6 months.
- Call your dentist if you have toothaches; red, sore, swollen, bleeding gums; and/or sensitive teeth.

References:

Data are from Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs) Tables. Recommended Daily Allowance and Adequate Intake Values: Total Water and Macronutrients.