Looking after your nails

If you have poor circulation, reduced sensation or poor eyesight or difficult nails, you will need to be assessed for NHS podiatry treatment. Otherwise you may cut your own nails.

Follow the shape of the end of your toe when cutting the nails. NEVER dig down the sides, as this may cause an ingrowing toenail. Never cut too short. Aim to leave yourself a margin of white at the end of the nail. Little and often is best. If you are unable to cut your own nails easily with clippers because the nails are too thick or if you can’t see them, try filing with an emery board type file, once a week.

NHS podiatry

The Podiatry service can provide an annual assessment for people with diabetes. This will include a foot and footwear examination, and an assessment of the circulation and sensation.

The Podiatrist will also answer any foot-related questions and discuss any health education needs. A treatment plan may be discussed for regular palliative treatment (corns, callus and nails). A change in footwear may be recommended or special insoles provided.

NHS shoes may be provided by the Orthotist. A Shoe fitting service may be available through your Podiatrist.

Only a podiatrist who is hpc registered is qualified to work in the national health service.

Clinic addresses

Diabetes Podiatry Clinic
Cheltenham General Hospital
Clinic D. West Block Out Patients
Sandford Road
Cheltenham
GL53 7AN
Tel. 08454 232255

Clinics in West Glos and parts of Cotswold and Vale
Podiatry Dept – Diabetes
Gloucester Royal Hospital
Great Western Road
Gloucester
GL1 3NN
Tel. 08454 228132 Appts
Tel. 08454 222222 Main line

Clinics in Cheltenham and Tewkesbury
Podiatry Services, St Pauls Medical Centre
121 Swindon Road
Cheltenham
GL50 4DP
Tel 01242 215470 Appts / Queries

Author: Diabetes Nurses
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Why do I have to look after my feet if I have diabetes?
It is very important that you take great care of your feet, as you may be at risk of damage to your circulation (vascular disease) and damage to the nerves, leading to reduction in sensation (neuropathy) in your feet.

Circulation
The blood vessels that supply the leg and the foot may become narrowed or blocked leading to problems with walking distances (e.g. your muscles may ache and may cause you to stop for a few minutes). This may also affect the healing of wounds, and could lead to ulceration of pressure points or more serious consequences.

Nerves
A wide range of symptoms may result from diabetic nerve damage including “painful feet”, “numb feet”, muscle weakness, toe deformity, or as a combination of all the above! If you have reduced sensation you may not be aware that you have injured your foot until further problems have occurred.

If you have neuropathy, you may not feel pain as a warning of problems occurring!

How can I prevent myself getting foot problems?
There are a number of simple checks that you can carry out yourself.

1 Inspect your feet daily: look between the toes, around the heels and under the foot, checking for cuts, bruises, foreign bodies, swellings, hot spots, or anything out of the ordinary.
   If you are unable to see under your feet, try using a mirror, or get someone else to check for you.
   If you do find a problem, such as infection, open wound, blister, it is important that you make an appointment to see the Practice Nurse, Doctor, or a State Registered Chiropodist/Podiatrist.

Never underestimate a foot problem, it may become very serious very rapidly!

2 Check your footwear before putting it on; look for foreign objects e.g. drawing pins, glass, grit, toys etc.
   Feel inside for rough seams, loose linings, damaged insoles.
   Check the soles of the shoes for damage or foreign objects.

3 Never walk barefoot: always have some forms of well fitting protective footwear, even in the house. Slippers are fine for short periods but otherwise a sensible pair of lace up shoes is preferable.

4 Avoid extremes of temperature: avoid any direct source of heat on your feet, e.g. hot water bottles, radiators, hot sand or concrete. And remember to check your bath water.

Your feet will only be as good as your shoes.

What can I do to look after my own feet?
Wash your feet daily in warm water and dry carefully, especially, in between toes. If you have dry skin use a plain non-perfumed moisturiser such as E45, Aqueous Cream B.P., Vaseline Intensive Care, etc. Do not use between your toes, as this will encourage problems, such as “Athletes foot”. If you find that in between your toes gets too moist, the use of surgical spirit dabbed on with a cotton wool bud daily may help.

If you suffer with athletes foot, you may find the use of an anti-fungal cream of benefit. If you suffer with hard skin (callus) under your feet or around the heels, the gentle use of an emery board type nail file may be useful on a little and often basis. The use of any acids contained in corn plasters or such like can cause ulceration and their use is dangerous.

If you are capable, regular exercise is beneficial. It is suggested that a steady 25 minute walk 5 times a week is beneficial.

Good diabetic control is essential to reduce the chance of foot problems.