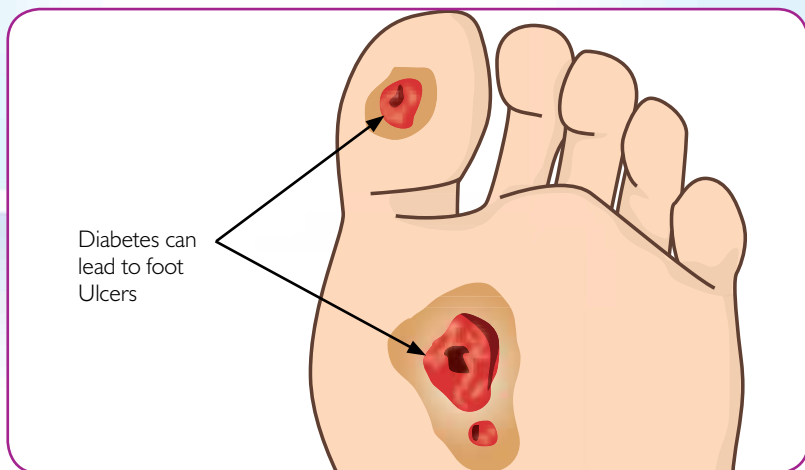


DIABETES



WHAT IS IT?

Having diabetes means your body is unable to control the glucose levels in the blood as well as it should. If the blood glucose levels are uncontrolled or controlled poorly, some problems can start to occur in the feet. One problem podiatrists commonly look for is a loss of feeling in the feet or "neuropathy". If you get a splinter or a stone in your shoe, it could

damage your foot without you knowing about it. Poor circulation can also result from uncontrolled diabetes. If you do get a cut and have a reduced blood supply to the feet then your healing time might be longer than normal which could mean you are more likely to develop an ulcer and pick up an infection.

DIAGNOSIS

The best way to diagnose a foot problem associated with diabetes is to see a podiatrist regularly. They will test your sensation and blood supply and check your skin integrity thoroughly. These tests will help them to determine your 'risk

status' which is their assessment of how likely they think you are to develop an ulcer or how well you heal after developing an ulcer. They will keep records and inform your diabetic nurse or GP if they are concerned.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

If your podiatrist discovers that the sensation or blood supply in your foot has decreased then it is really important that you pay special attention to your feet. This includes a very simple daily check of both feet to make sure there are no wounds.

You can also ask your family to help or use a mirror to see under your foot if you need to. It is also wise to wear footwear at all times and check the inside of the shoes before wearing to protect your feet. If your nails are getting long it is best to

file them rather than cut them yourself, or see a podiatrist to help you.

Applying moisturiser to the feet at least three times a week especially around the heels and sole of the foot will keep your skin healthy and supple and less likely to break or crack.

To prevent an ulcer, it is also important that you do not try to self treat any foot problems you may have such as corns and callus. If you suffer from

Continued overleaf



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TREATMENT OPTIONS CONTINUED

cold feet then it is important that you do not place your feet directly on a radiator. Wearing extra socks and using blankets are much safer as you won't burn yourself.

If a wound or foot ulcer does occur then it is vital that you visit your nurse or podiatrist to have it dressed properly until it heals. In all cases prevention is better than cure as some ulcers can take weeks or months to heal and lead to more severe problems.

It is therefore vital that you control your blood glucose levels, blood cholesterol and blood pressure with your medication and eat sensibly. If you feel that your feet need attention or you notice any changes to your feet then speak to your podiatrist as soon as possible to get the right care and advice.

GENERAL FOOTCARE ADVICE

REGULAR WASHING

Feet should be washed daily in warm water and then dried gently with a soft towel. A sprinkling of soothing foot powder is helpful, especially between the toes.

VALUE OF MASSAGE

Massage will help tone up circulation and relax the muscles. Try contrast bathing by alternatively dipping the feet first in comfortably hot water for one minute and then cold water for twenty seconds for a total of ten minutes. Always finish with the cold dip.

CUT TOE NAILS REGULARLY

Keep toe nails trimmed to just over the tip of the toe and cut them straight across. Never cut around the corners as this may lead to ingrowing toe nails. Cut them at least once per month.