

## Patient Guide

# What you should know about diabetic foot ulcers

## What is a diabetic foot ulcer?

A diabetic foot ulcer (DFU) is an open sore or wound on the foot of someone with diabetes. They are typically located on the bottom of the foot, between the toes, arch of the foot, the heel or tips of the toes.<sup>1</sup>

DFUs are the most common complication associated with diabetes and the leading non-traumatic cause of foot amputations worldwide.<sup>2</sup> Early and optimal medical care may help prevent at least 50% of amputations due to neuropathy.



## What puts you at risk for a diabetic foot ulcer?<sup>3</sup>



**Diabetes,**  
uncontrolled  
blood sugar



**Diabetic nerve damage**  
(diabetic neuropathy) that  
causes reduced sensation,  
dry and cracked skin and  
foot deformities



**Reduced blood flow  
to the lower limb**  
(arterial insufficiency)



**Poor fitting shoes**



**Small cuts, ingrown toenails,  
blisters and calluses**

## What is the treatment for a diabetic foot ulcer?

Your healthcare professional will determine a treatment plan.

\*Offloading: The use of a special cast, boot or shoe that helps relieve pressure from the weight-bearing surface of the foot.

- Manage your diabetes**
- Clean and cover your wound with the correct dressing**
- Prevent infection**
- Take pressure off the area, called "offloading"\***

# How can you help prevent diabetic foot ulcer formation?<sup>4</sup>



**Check your feet daily** for any changes, including between your toes; use a mirror or ask a family member for help.



**Wash your feet daily** using mild soap and warm water. Do not use hot water and never soak your feet.



**Completely dry your feet,** including between the toes.



**Apply lotion to the tops, bottoms and heels** of your feet and avoid lotion and excess moisture between your toes.



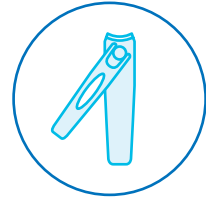
**Get a foot exam every year** and have your feet checked at every doctor visit.



**Wear shoes that fit well,** avoid wearing shoes without socks and never walk barefoot.



**Check inside of shoes** for objects before putting them on.



**Keep your toenails trimmed,** do not remove corns or calluses yourself — if you can't see or reach your feet, visit a podiatrist or foot expert for nail care.



## What are some of the trouble signs I should report to my healthcare provider?

- Change in your foot's temperature (feels hot or cold)
- Change in your toes and/or foot's skin color
- Swelling, pain, fever or discomfort
- Ingrown toenails, blisters, calluses, cracking, wounds or rashes
- Increased redness in your wound
- Increase in wound pain, size and drainage
- Wound odor
- New skin breakdown

**Important information:** Patients should consult with their healthcare provider regarding their special conditions and treatments in addition to the information provided in this guide.



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1. International Best Practice Guidelines: Wound Management in Diabetic Foot Ulcers. *Wounds International*, 2013.

2. Hingorani, A, LaMuraglia, G. M, Henke, P, et al. The management of diabetic foot: a clinical practice guideline by the Society for Vascular Surgery in collaboration with the American Podiatric Medical Association and the Society for Vascular Medicine. *Journal of Vascular Surgery*; 2016 63(2), 3S-21S.

3. Complications of Diabetes Mellitus (cdc.gov) (accessed July 7, 2021).

4. [cdc.gov/diabetes/library/features/healthy-feet.html](https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/library/features/healthy-feet.html)

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