

Foot Care

Part of the *Learning to Live Well with Diabetes* Series

Welcome! A diabetes diagnosis can feel overwhelming. There is so much to learn and so much to do. The **Learning to Live Well with Diabetes** series was created to share clear, practical information and resources to offer support without adding extra stress. Setting small, manageable goals over time can help relieve stress and lead to lasting health improvements, and you don't have to do it alone. Please take what is helpful to you on your journey and leave the rest.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact:

AHS.VDHHPDPDiabetesTeam@vermont.gov

Diabetes and Feet: What's the connection?



Taking care of your feet is especially important if you have diabetes, because high blood sugar over time can affect both circulation and the nerves in your feet. This can make it harder to feel small injuries like blisters or cuts, and slower for those injuries to heal. Even minor issues can become more serious if they go unnoticed. The good news is that simple, regular foot care—like checking your feet daily, keeping them clean and moisturized and wearing well-fitting shoes—can go a long way in preventing problems. Paying attention to your feet is one more way to support your overall health and stay active and comfortable.

Caring for Your Feet

Caring for your feet when you have diabetes can feel like one more thing to keep track of, and it is. The good news is that a few small, consistent habits can make a big difference without taking up a lot of time. You probably already do many things to take care of your feet without even thinking about them.

On the next pages, you'll find some things you can do to help stay comfortable, prevent problems and keep doing the things you enjoy.



HealthVermont.gov
802-863-7200

 **VERMONT**
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Caring for Your Feet



Check your feet every day

Look for cuts, blisters, redness, swelling or nail changes.

Why it matters: Reduced sensation can make it easy to miss small injuries before they become bigger problems.



Wash your feet daily

Use warm (not hot) water and mild soap, then dry well—especially between the toes.

Why it matters: Keeps skin clean and helps prevent infections, while moisture between toes can lead to fungal growth.



Moisturize dry skin

Apply lotion to the tops and bottoms of your feet, but not between the toes.

Why it matters: Prevents cracking, which can create openings for infection.



Trim toenails carefully

Cut nails straight across and file the edges.

Why it matters: Helps prevent ingrown toenails and injury to surrounding skin.



Wear well-fitting shoes and clean, dry socks

Choose shoes that don't rub or pinch and avoid walking barefoot.

Why it matters: Protects your feet from injury and reduces the risk of blisters and sores.



Check inside your shoes before putting them on

Make sure there are no pebbles, rough spots, or objects inside.

Why it matters: Small items can cause injury without you noticing.

Caring for Your Feet (Continued)



Protect your feet from extreme temperatures

Wear shoes on hot surfaces and keep feet warm in cold weather. Avoid using hot water bottles or heating pads directly on your feet.

Why it matters: Reduced sensation can make burns or frostbite more likely.



Don't try to treat foot problems on your own

Avoid using over-the-counter corn or callus removers or sharp tools.

Why it matters: These can damage the skin and lead to infection.



See a health care provider annually

Have your feet checked at routine visits and report any changes right away. It is important to call your health care provider sooner if you have concerns.

Why it matters: Early care can prevent small concerns from becoming serious complications.

Tip:

If you have trouble seeing or reaching your feet, you may need to ask for help with some of these tasks, and that is OK. A friend, family member, or community health worker may be able to assist. You can also try using a mirror to see the bottoms of your feet.



What is a Podiatrist?



A podiatrist is a health care provider who specializes in foot and ankle care. For someone with diabetes, a podiatrist has extra training in preventing and treating the kinds of foot problems that can develop when circulation or sensation is affected.

While a primary care provider will usually check your feet as part of your overall diabetes care, a podiatrist focuses more deeply on foot health. They can treat concerns like ingrown toenails, calluses, corns, foot pain and skin or nail infections. They're also trained to manage more serious issues, like ulcers or wounds that are slow to heal, and can help prevent complications. Podiatrists may also provide specialized care like safely trimming nails, recommending proper footwear or orthotics and creating a plan to protect your feet over time.

Your primary care provider helps manage your overall health and diabetes, while a podiatrist offers more specialized care to keep your feet healthy and address problems early.

When to See a Health care Provider

If you notice any changes in your feet, it's best to have them checked sooner rather than later. Getting care early can help prevent small issues from becoming bigger problems. If you experience any of the following (or anything else that concerns you), reach out to your primary care provider. Your provider may refer you to a specialist. Be sure to let your provider know if you need help with costs, language, transportation or other challenges, so they can talk with you about available resources.



Contact your provider if you notice:

- A cut, blister, or sore that isn't healing
- Redness, warmth, swelling, or pain in any part of the foot
- Signs of infection (such as drainage, odor, or fever)
- A toenail that is ingrown, thickened, or causing discomfort
- New numbness, tingling, or burning sensations
- Changes in skin color or temperature
- Cracks in the skin, especially if they are deep or bleeding
- Corns or calluses that become painful or irritated
- Any injury to your foot, even if it seems minor