

## Put Your Best Feet Forward

Two complications of diabetes make it important to pay special attention to your feet.

- 1. Nerve damage.** The nerves in your legs and feet are vulnerable to damage caused by high levels of blood sugar. This may affect your ability to feel pain, heat, or cold in your legs and feet. You may also experience odd sensations or numbness. This nerve damage, called peripheral diabetic neuropathy, can lead to a sore or an infection, which may get worse because you don't know it's there.
- 2. Poor blood flow.** When too little blood circulates to your legs and feet, it's hard for a sore or infection to heal. This problem is called peripheral vascular disease.

### Start taking care of your feet today

Neglecting your feet can result in serious consequences, including amputation in the worst case. That's why you'll want to prevent problems before they arise.

- **Keep your feet clean and protected**
  - Wash them every day, and dry them carefully, especially between the toes.
  - Don't go barefoot. Wear clean socks and comfortable shoes that protect your feet.
  - To keep the skin soft and smooth, rub a thin coat of lotion on your feet every day, but not between your toes.
  - Ask your health care professional about insurance coverage for special protective shoes.
  - Avoid exposing your feet to extreme heat or cold. Even hot bathwater isn't good for them. Avoid heating pads, hot water bottles, and electric blankets.
- **Watch out for wounds and infections**
  - Check your feet every day for wounds or infections. Use a mirror if you have trouble seeing the soles of your feet.
  - Keep your toenails properly trimmed, in a straight line. If you cannot trim them safely yourself, ask your health care professional to trim them.
  - Have your health care professional trim any corns or calluses on your feet.
  - Have a health care professional examine your feet regularly—at least once a year or more often if you have foot problems.
  - Contact your health care professional early if you have cuts or breaks in the skin of your foot, a change in color or shape, pain or numbness, or an ingrown toenail. Even athlete's foot, blisters, and plantar warts can become infected.



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- **Keep the blood flowing to your legs and feet**
  - Don't sit with one leg crossed over the other.
  - When you're able to, prop your feet up when you're sitting.
  - Wiggle your toes and flex your ankles by moving your feet for about 5 minutes 2 to 3 times every day.
  - Don't smoke—smoking can make circulation problems worse.

### Reward your feet for their years of faithful service

Two very helpful things you can do for your feet are:

- Keep your blood sugar in your target range.
- Be more active by following your doctor-approved exercise program.

For more information about diabetes, please visit [JourneyForControl.com](http://JourneyForControl.com).

