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Footcare for diabetics

A few simple steps can help prevent foot problems, for example:

- Check feet daily for any signs of injury or changes in colour.
- Wash feet daily and dry well between the toes.
- Keep toenails trimmed. Cut toenails straight across and file rough edges.
- Avoid injury by wearing well-fitting, protective shoes.
- Have corns or calluses treated by a podiatrist.

Diabetes can reduce blood circulation and also damage the nerves to the feet. If you have diabetes, daily footcare is essential.

Hardened arteries

Hardened arteries can cause poor blood flow to the feet and slow down the healing process.

Hardened arteries can be caused by:

- Smoking
- High blood fat levels
- High blood pressure
- High blood sugar

Nerve damage can lead to foot ulcers

The nerves to the feet are the longest and the most likely to be affected by diabetes. A person whose nerves are damaged by diabetes may not realise they have minor cuts or blisters and this can lead to foot ulcers.

Nerve damage can cause:

- Painful feet
- Numbness in the feet
- Pins and needles or shooting pain in the feet
- Burning sensation, particularly on the soles of the feet.

How to treat cuts or injuries

If you have diabetes and become injured, prompt action can avoid any serious problem.

- Clean the injury with a mild antiseptic, such as Betadine or liquid Savlon
- Cover with clean gauze and surgical tape
- See your doctor if the cut or injury becomes red or does not heal in two days.

How to improve circulation to the feet

Circulation can be improved if you:

- Avoid smoking
- Are physically active
- Control blood fat and glucose levels
- Control blood pressure.

If you control blood glucose levels it will also reduce the risk of nerve damage.

Things to remember

Ask your doctor to examine your feet regularly for any evidence of nerve damage or poor circulation. Foot problems can be avoided if you take care of your feet and act quickly if you have a problem.