

Appendix 21: Foot Care

Foot problems are very common in people with diabetes, since diabetes can cause nerve damage and poor circulation to the legs and feet. People with diabetes are less likely to feel a foot injury and if they develop an injury, it is more difficult to heal. Untreated foot injuries can quickly become infected, potentially leading to serious complications. As always, prevention is the best medicine. Below is a list of things that people living with diabetes can do and should not to do for proper foot care.

Good foot care – TO DO:

Check BOTH feet every day for the following:

- Numbness
 - Redness
 - Dryness
 - Cuts or cracks
 - Bruises
 - Blisters or sores
 - Infections
 - Changes in shape
 - Unusual markings
- Use a mirror to see the bottom of their feet if they cannot lift them up. Ask a family member to help if they are not able to see their feet using a mirror
 - Check the color of their legs & feet – seek help if there is swelling, warmth or redness
 - Wash and dry their feet every day, especially between the toes
 - Apply a good skin lotion every day on their heels and soles. Wipe off excess
 - Choose a lotion with no perfume or alcohol
 - Change their socks every day and choose white cotton socks with no seams
 - Trim their nails straight across
 - Have a trained health care provider trim their toenails if they are unable to reach their toes, or do not have feelings in their feet
 - Clean a cut or scratch with mild soap and water and cover with dry dressing
 - Wear good supportive, closed toes shoes or professionally fitted shoes with low heels (under 5 cm)
 - Shake out their shoes before putting them on. Look and feel inside the shoes before putting them on as some objects can get stuck in there and might not fall out when shaking the shoes
 - Buy shoes in the late afternoon since their feet swell by then
 - Avoid extreme cold and heat (including the sun)
 - Get regular foot care
 - See a foot care specialist if they need advice or treatment



Good foot care – DO NOT:

- Cut their own corns or callouses
- Break blisters, as the skin provides protection
- Treat their own in-growing toenails or slivers with a razor or scissors. They should see their doctor or foot care specialist
- Use over-the-counter medications to treat corns and warts
- Apply heat with a hot water bottle or electric blanket as this may cause burns unknowingly
- Soak their feet. Water dries their feet even more
- Take very hot baths
- Use lotion between their toes
- Walk barefoot inside or outside
- Wear tight socks, garter or elastics or knee highs
- Wear over-the-counter insoles as this may cause blisters if they do not fit right for their feet
- Sit for long periods of time
- Smoke

Report the following to the community nurse, foot care nurse or Diabetes Integration Project (DIP) nurse:

- New reddened areas, bruising or discoloration
- Numbness
- Tingling
- Changing shape
- Swelling
- New open areas (cracks or blisters)
- Pain in their feet

Foot care services in every First Nation community:

Since 2017 basic foot care services have been available in every First Nations community in Manitoba. This service will help prevent foot complications and prevent serious foot problems including amputation.

As the ADI worker it is not your responsibility, nor part of your job, to screen clients for foot problems. Instead, encourage community members living with diabetes to have their feet checked by the foot care nurse.

If you are unsure how clients can access the foot care nurse in your community, contact your Tribal Diabetes Coordinator, your community nurse or one of the FNIHB employees to connect you with your community's foot care nurse.

Non-insured Health Benefits coverage:

Non-Insured Health Benefits coverage for special foot wear orthotics is available for people living with diabetes. They will need:

- A prescription from a doctor
- An appointment for a special fitting
- To pay upfront and then apply for reimbursement

For more information on foot care, or to order handouts on foot care, please visit the Diabetes Canada website at: <https://orders.diabetes.ca/collections/educational-material/products/foot-care-a-step-toward-good-health?variant=1270037889>



Use your ADI resources to teach this concept!

The common foot problems foot model (picture provided) has been provided to every Manitoba ADI community program. Look for your foot model and use it to teach community members and workers about the importance of good foot care and possible foot problems common for people living with diabetes.

Should you not have this resource, contact one of the ADI FNIHB team members. Refer to Appendix 11 for a full list of resources provided to the ADI community programs.