

# Have Diabetes? Take Care of Your Feet!

## ***How can diabetes hurt my feet?***

People with diabetes are at risk for bad foot infections. There are many reasons for this. Too much sugar in the blood for a long time can cause people with diabetes to have nerve damage and to have less feeling in their feet. You may not feel pain, or hot or cold. When you have less feeling in your feet, you might hurt your foot and not even know it. Also, if you have less feeling in your feet, you may begin to walk a little bit different which can cause calluses. These calluses sometimes get infected.

Another reason is that if you have diabetes, there can be less blood flow to your legs and feet. This might make it hard for a sore on your feet to get better.

## ***What happens if I get a sore on my foot?***

People with diabetes can get a sore on their foot and not even know it. If the sore gets infected and you do not get antibiotics, it could get worse and worse. Sometimes the sore will never heal. Sometime the sore gets gangrene. If this happens, the sore may get black and smell bad. To keep gangrene from getting worse, the doctor may need to cut off the toes or foot.

## ***How should I take care of my feet?***

There are a few things to do to keep your feet from getting a sore. These are:

- Check your feet every day. Look for sores, cuts, blisters or redness, especially in between the toes. If you cannot see your feet, use a mirror to check them or have a family member or friend check them for you.
- Keep your feet clean and dry. Wash them with WARM (not hot) water every day. Remember, you may not know the water is too hot if you put just your feet in it. To check the water, dip your elbow in the water.
- Make sure your toenails are cut. Cut them after a bath when they are soft. Cut them in the shape of your toes and not too short.
- Gently file corns and calluses after your bath or shower. Use a pumice stone or an emory board.
- If you don't have good feeling in your feet, go to a foot doctor to get your toenails cut. Also, the foot doctor will file corns or calluses.
- Don't let your feet get too dry or cracked. If they are too dry, rub moisturizer on them after you get out of the shower or bath.
- Go to your foot doctor regularly.
- Do not walk barefoot. Always wear shoes or slippers.
- Do not wear your shoes without socks. Socks will keep your feet dry and help protect them from sores or cuts.
- Make sure your shoes fit well so you don't get blisters or sores.

## ***What else can I do so I don't get a foot infection?***

There are a few other things you can do to keep from getting a foot infection. These are:

- Keep your blood sugar under control. Too much sugar in the blood can feed the germs that cause a foot infection.
- Stop smoking. Smoking can decrease the blood flow to your legs and feet.
- If you see any changes in your feet, tell your health care provider right away.

[July 2012]