

Foot Care in Diabetes

A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS/FAMILIES



This brochure provides information about foot care in diabetes. It is designed to respond to questions most frequently asked by patients.



آغا خان یونیورسٹی ہسپتال، کراچی

The Aga Khan University Hospital, Karachi
P.O. Box 3500, Stadium Road, Karachi-74800, Pakistan.
www.aku.edu





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In diabetes, body is not able to regulate the use of sugar. As a result, the level of sugar (glucose) remains high in the body. Long-term high blood glucose impairs blood circulation in your feet. It can damage the nerve and may lead to numbness. Consequently, if you hurt your feet, or burn them or have any infection, you may not feel the pain. Not only that, because of poor circulation, there is poor healing of foot infections and ulcers that may lead to amputation. That is why it is very important that you take good care of your feet and follow the guidelines given below.

How Should I Care For My Feet?

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Control your blood sugar by following your diabetes regimen (diet control, exercise and, if prescribed, tablets and insulin).• Keep your feet clean – wash your feet with soap and water and dry gently with soft cloth. keep them dry.• Examine your feet daily from all sides especially between toes. Use a mirror or ask for help and report cuts, cracks, corns, swelling or colour change to your doctor or diabetes nurse.• Wear shoes or slippers at all times.• Choose shoes that provide good support. They must be broad, long, and deep enough for you to be able to wriggle your toes.• Check your shoes regularly for ridges, stones and sharp points/nails. Tip shoes upside down before putting them on;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you are required to stand for extended period at work, you may need job modification. If you need any help, contact your doctor or diabetes nurse.• Do not walk bare foot.• Do not take hot baths (always fill the utensil with cold water before adding hot water. Test the temperature with your elbow).• Do not treat cones or callosities yourself.• Do not tie bandages too tight. It will reduce circulation.



Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wear new shoes half an hour at a time, preferably with loose socks;• Carefully trim/cut nails straight across with clippers after a bath when nails are soft. File edges with a nail file;• Refrain from smoking;• Take regular walks to aid circulation;• Avoid extremes of temperature/heat or cold. <u>Do not use hot water bottles.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not cross your legs when sitting for long periods of time.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of a Foot Infection?

Early Signs	Late Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pain;• Warmth;• Tenderness;• Mild swelling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Redness;• Fever;• Swelling;• Discharge from infected wound.

What Should I do if I Get a Simple Injury?

- Clean the wound and apply a mild antiseptic and sterile dressing daily;
- Contact your doctor or diabetes nurse if no improvement takes place within two days.

What Should I do if I Have a Foot Ulcer?

- If your doctor prescribes antibiotic, always take full course to eradicate the infection completely;
- Take tablets orally or insulin if prescribed by your doctor to achieve tight control of blood glucose;



- Avoid pure sugar (honey, sweets, jelly, cold drinks) but take complex carbohydrates (roti, cereal, daal with husk, noodles, rice, white bread, etc.) and high protein diet (fish, chicken, beef, mutton, egg) Good nutrition will help in the healing process;
- Come to the dressing clinic for dressings as recommended by your doctor;
- Always visit the same doctor for your diabetes and foot treatment, as you and your wound require special attention. If you go from doctor to doctor and clinic to clinic, you may increase your risk of amputation.
- Daily sterile dressings are important to keep the wound clean, to monitor the progress and take action on time;
- Bring one of your family members with you so he or she can assist you whenever you require support at home;
- Soaking feet is not recommended;
- Do not dangle your feet for long periods of time;
- Reduce weight bearing on the ulcer;
- For patients confined to bed, protection of heel and ankle is essential;
- Perform passive or active range of motion exercises;
- Inspect both feet daily for unusual findings like redness, swelling, tenderness, foul smell;
- **Remember:** Even if your foot ulcer has healed, you are at risk of future ulceration and amputation.

Important Note

Do not treat infections and ulcers yourself. See your doctor. Your doctor may prescribe a course of antibiotics along with stay in hospital for observation and prompt control of infection and blood glucose.

Follow Up

It is extremely important for you to keep your follow-up appointment so that your doctor and diabetes nurse can check your progress.

Diabetes Clinic	Emergency Ward
Mon. - Fri. 8:00 am - 5:00 pm	Aga Khan University Hospital
Sat. 8:00 am - 12 Noon	Karachi.
Aga Khan University Hospital	Phone : 34930051, Ext : 1090-91
Karachi.	For Dressing Contact:
Phone : 34930051, Ext : 5788	Community Health Centre Ext : 1491