

Diabetic Foot Ulcer: Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions

Diabetes can damage the nerve endings and blood vessels in your feet. That means you are less likely to notice when your feet are injured. A small skin problem like a callus, blister, or cracked skin can turn into a larger sore, called a foot ulcer. Foot ulcers form most often on the pad (ball) of the foot or the bottom of the big toe. You can also get them on the top and bottom of each toe.

Foot ulcers can get infected. If the infection is severe, then tissue in the foot can die. This is called gangrene. In that case, one or more of the toes, part or all of the foot, and sometimes part of the leg may have to be removed (amputated).

Your doctor may have removed the dead tissue and cleaned the ulcer. Your foot wound may be wrapped in a protective bandage. It is very important to keep your weight off your injured foot. After a foot ulcer has formed, it will not heal as long as you keep putting weight on the area.

Always get early treatment for foot problems. A minor irritation can lead to a major problem if it's not taken care of soon.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Follow your doctor's instructions about keeping pressure off the foot ulcer. You may need to use crutches or a wheelchair. Or you may wear a cast or a walking boot.
- Follow your doctor's instructions on how to clean the ulcer and change the bandage.
- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.

To prevent foot ulcers

- Keep your blood sugar close to normal by watching what and how much you eat. Track your blood sugar, take medicines if prescribed, and get regular exercise.
- Do not smoke. Smoking affects blood flow and can make foot problems worse. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.
- Do not go barefoot. Protect your feet by wearing shoes that fit well. Choose shoes that are made of materials that are flexible and breathable, such as leather or cloth.
- Inspect your feet daily for blisters, cuts, cracks, or sores. If you can't see well, use a mirror or have someone help you.
- Have your doctor check your feet during each visit. If you have a foot problem, see your doctor. Do not try to treat your foot problem on your own. Home remedies or treatments that you can buy without a prescription (such as corn removers) can be harmful.

When should you call for help?



Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have symptoms of infection, such as:
 - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
 - Red streaks leading from the area.
 - Pus draining from the area.
 - A fever.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You have a new problem with your feet, such as:
 - A new sore or ulcer.
 - A break in the skin that is not healing after several days.
 - Bleeding corns or calluses.
 - An ingrown toenail.
- You do not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patientEd>

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