

Neuropathic/Diabetic Foot Ulcer

WHAT IS IT?

A neuropathic/diabetic foot ulcer occurs when a person with diabetes has a loss of sensation in their feet, as a result of diabetes. A person with loss of sensation may not be able to feel pain or discomfort in their foot—even when it is injured. The result is often that the person continues to walk on the injured foot, causing more injury and preventing healing. What started as a minor wound—caused by stubbing a toe, wearing shoes that don't fit properly, callus build-up, stepping on something or even poor skin and nail care—can get infected and lead to serious health problems, including amputation and even death.

Key points:

- ☑ Keep your blood glucose under control
- ☑ Inspect your feet every day
- ☑ Wear the right type of shoes

Diabetic foot ulcers related to neuropathy commonly result from inappropriate pressure on your feet. If you can't tell that your shoes don't fit properly or are worn down they are often the cause of this pressure. The pressure can then result in a build-up of skin, called callus, over bony areas. This callus would be bothersome if you had good sensation, but unfortunately due to neuropathy the callus build-up is often not addressed and can actually lead to foot ulcers. Callus build-up needs to be professionally managed, especially on toes and the ball of your foot. Most importantly, footwear needs to be fitted by a professional.



WHAT CAN I DO MYSELF (DIY)?

If you have diabetes you probably already know it is very important to manage your blood glucose levels. However, let's focus on your feet for a minute. You should check all parts of your feet every day to make sure you have no injury to the skin (see [Caring for Your Feet: Safe Foot Care if You Have Diabetes](#) for detailed information on how to do a daily foot check). Wearing shoes that fit and are cushioned properly is an important part of protecting your feet. However, if you already have a foot ulcer you need to **remove the pressure** from the ulcer site immediately or the ulcer will not heal. How? **Stay off your foot or obtain prescribed footwear to reduce the pressure over the ulcer.** Staying off your foot might be difficult, but it is worth it to heal your ulcer.

THE KEY RULE

Be aware of neuropathy and visually inspect your feet **every day.**

WHEN DO I CALL IN A PRO?

You may need to make an appointment with a professional such as a footcare specialist for skin and nail care or a podiatrist or orthotist to get advice on what type of footwear is right for you. If callus build-up or an ulcer is present, you will need immediate professional help and lifestyle changes to reduce or eliminate pressure on the foot.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Another set of free resources, called the [Care at Home series](#), may also be of interest to you, especially [Caring for Your Feet: Safe Foot Care if You Have Diabetes](#) and [Diabetic Foot Complications: When is it an emergency?](#)