

Foot Examinations for People with Diabetes



Canadian Association
of Wound Care



Association canadienne
du soin des plaies

The main goal of a foot examination is to determine if you are at risk for diabetes-related foot complications.

- If you have diabetes, you are at risk of developing foot problems as a result of nerve damage (called neuropathy), poor blood flow or changes in the shape of your feet or toes.
- These problems can put your feet at risk of developing calluses, blisters, wounds or infections that may ultimately lead to amputation.
- The good news is that most amputations are preventable with regular screening, proper foot care and wearing properly fitted shoes.
- Regular foot examination can help both you and your healthcare professional identify potential risk factors as they arise and manage them in a timely fashion, thereby preventing or delaying any further complications.
- The frequency of a foot examination is determined by how high-risk your feet are for wounds, and is agreed upon by you and your healthcare professional.

Your healthcare professional will *look, feel and ask.*

LOOK

Nails: Thickened, ingrown or infected.

Skin: Callused, blistered, cracked, wounded or infected.

Foot structure: Deformities or swelling.

Redness: This can occur as a result of infection, inflammation or circulation changes.

Shoes: Must be supportive, fit properly. As well, look for any foreign objects or rough edges.

FEEL

Foot temperature: A difference in temperature between feet can alert the healthcare professional to infection, lack of blood circulation or inflammation.

Pulses: To determine if the blood supply to the foot is sufficient to maintain foot health.

Range of motion: To check the mobility of foot joints – especially the first toe joint – to ensure that the pressure is balanced throughout the whole foot.

Sensation: A loss of sensation (neuropathy) can be determined if a patient is unable to feel a monofilament when applied to his/her foot.

ASK

The following four questions are asked to determine if there is a potential loss of sensation in the foot:

1. Do your feet ever feel numb?
2. Do they tingle?
3. Do they ever feel like they are burning?
4. Do they feel like insects are crawling on them?

Other key questions a healthcare professional may ask are:

- How long have you had diabetes?
- Is your blood glucose under control? (Your blood glucose should be between 4.0 and 7.0 mmol/L before eating, and 5.0 and 10.0 mmol/L two hours after eating.) Always consult with your physician or endocrinologist regarding your optimal blood glucose levels.
- Do you have a history of foot ulcers or amputation?

Key things to remember:

- Check your feet daily.
- Visit your healthcare professional regularly.
- If you detect a crack, blister or wound, seek help from your foot care team immediately!

For more information, please visit our *Diabetes, Healthy Feet and You* website:

www.cawc.net/diabetesandhealthyfeet

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