This is a guide only and does not replace clinical judgment.

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Diabetic Foot Ulcers

What is a diabetic foot ulcer?

- A diabetic foot ulcer is a sore or broken skin area, often on the bottom of the foot or over bony areas.
- They can occur from injury, pressure, or rubbing of skin (e.g. from shoes).
- They may worsen because of lack of feeling (neuropathy) in your feet.
- Most diabetic foot ulcers can be prevented or healed quickly if they are picked up in the early stages.

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Do

- See a skilled health professional to inspect feet at least once a year.
- Inspect your feet and toes daily.
- Cut nails straight across.
- Check there are no sharp or rough edges in shoes before putting them on.
- Tell your health professional as soon as possible if you notice red areas, a blister, cut, scratch or sore.
- Wash and dry your feet carefully, especially between the toes.
- Check the temperature of the water before putting your feet in.
- Change your socks daily.
- Use a moisturiser for dry skin but avoid moisturising between the toes.
- Monitor blood sugar levels regularly. Healthy blood sugar levels promote healing.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Stop smoking.

Don’t

- Do not walk indoors or outdoors without socks and shoes.
- Do not use plasters to remove calluses—see a health professional.
- Do not use a heater or hot water bottle to warm your feet.
- Do not wear shoes and socks that are too tight or too loose.
- Do not wear socks with seams.

Poorly fitting shoes are the most frequent cause of diabetic foot ulcers.