

HealthInfo Canterbury

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Diabetes & feet

If you have diabetes it is important to look after your feet.

Diabetes can damage the nerves ([diabetic neuropathy](#)) and blood vessels supplying your feet. This can affect the feeling in your feet ([peripheral neuropathy](#)) and circulation in your feet ([ischaemia](#)).

These changes can lead to problems with your feet such as infections and [ulcers](#).

Severe foot disease can lead to you losing toes or even your whole foot (amputation).

You are low-risk for diabetic foot problems if your feet are in good condition.

You are medium- or high-risk for diabetic foot problems if:

- you have lost some feeling in your feet
- you have reduced circulation in your feet
- you have hard skin on your feet
- the shape of your feet has changed
- diabetes is damaging your vision
- you can't look after your feet yourself
- you have had ulcers before
- you have had an amputation.

Symptoms of diabetic feet

Early damage may not cause any symptoms. A foot check with your [practice nurse](#), [GP](#), or [podiatrist](#) will pick up early signs of damage.

You may get pins and needles, burning or numbness in your feet.

You may also get pain in your feet or legs.

Treating diabetic feet

[Looking after your feet](#) is most important in treating diabetic foot problems.

Good control of your diabetes will help your feet heal.

Infection in your feet will need quick treatment with [antibiotics](#).

Manage infected [foot ulcers](#) with dressings and antibiotics.



Your doctor may prescribe [pain relief medication](#) to treat pain in your feet.

Self-care for diabetic feet

Look after your feet. For more information, see [Self-care for your feet](#).

Have good control of your diabetes.

[Don't smoke](#).

[Eat well](#) and be [physically active](#).

See your [nurse](#), [doctor](#), or [podiatrist](#) for a foot check at least once a year.

Find out if you have low-, medium- or high-risk feet.

If you have medium- or high-risk feet, you will need to see a podiatrist regularly. They provide foot care such as advice on toenail cutting.

Get checked for [high blood pressure](#) and [high cholesterol](#), as these can affect the blood flow to your feet.

Getting help for diabetic feet

The following health care professionals can help:

- your [GP](#) or [practice nurse](#)
- [diabetes clinic team](#)
- [podiatrists](#).

If you have high-risk feet you may be able to see a podiatrist without needing to pay.

On the next page: [Self-care for your feet](#)

Written by HealthInfo [clinical advisers](#). Page created July 2019.

Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha