

Best foot forward – step by step guide

How should you look after your feet and make foot care a part of your daily life? Just follow the simple, practical steps outlined in this leaflet and learn to put your best foot forward.

Work to achieve the best blood sugar control possible. Recent studies have shown that people with diabetes who have better glucose control have fewer complications with their diabetes, including the nerve damage that leads to foot problems. A sensory nerve examination should be carried out by your Diabetes Care Team at least once a year.

Exercise regularly. For example, walking, at least three times per week for approximately twenty minutes each time. Though no one fully understands why, walking makes blood vessels work better. If you exercise regularly this gives you an advantage in controlling your blood sugar.

Be choosy about your shoes. Shoes must be soft. The upper part should always be made of leather. Shoes must be firm-fitting so that they do not rub up and down and cause heel blisters but, at the same time, they must not feel so tight as to restrict blood circulation. Shoes should not put too much pressure on any part of your foot. Your weight should be distributed evenly over your entire heel and sole. Ideally your feet should be properly measured for shoes.

Some people find running shoes very comfortable to wear. If you have feet that tend to swell as the day goes on try keeping a pair of shoes just for morning and another larger pair for the afternoon when your feet are swollen. Changing shoes at mid-day ensures that feet stay dry and comfortable.



VIP!

One of the first ways in which diabetes may affect your feet is through the loss of sensation often starting at the toes. Talk to your Doctor if you notice numbness in your feet.

Practice foot care as a daily hygiene, just like brushing your teeth. Foot care includes looking at your feet once a day, in good light, both on top and underneath. The bottom of your feet can be seen using a simple long-handled or angled mirror. You could tape a small mirror to a large spoon and keep it in your bathroom or bedroom for daily use.

Fungal nail infections can be a problem. Such infections often establish themselves under the nail, thickening, lifting and slowly destroying it. Thick, white, grey or crumbly nails are a sign of fungal infection. Nail care must include gentle and regular scraping of the top of the nail and the use of anti-fungal medicines at the first sign of a fungal infection. Once you have an infection, scraping and removal of the infected area should be done by a professional.

Look for obvious cuts and blisters, but also, early signs of problems which could be prevented with the right treatments. These include red areas or calluses which indicate pressure points, corns and early cracks.

Wash your feet carefully in water that does not exceed 37°C. Use a thermometer to test - some people with diabetes may not be able to sense temperatures high enough to burn skin. Mild soap is all that should be used on feet. Soaking for a few minutes can soften nails for easier cutting and is generally good for feet. But be careful not to exceed 5-10 minutes, as this can lead to softening of the skin, especially in areas in which water gets trapped. If you suffer from dry skin you can safely moisturize your skin with mild creams such as lanolin, but you should avoid moisturizing between the toes. After bathing pay special attention to drying the hidden areas between toes where water often gets trapped.

Did you know: Loss of feeling in your feet is called neuropathy

If your feet sweat excessively you should wear shoes that help your feet “breathe”. Change your socks and shoes frequently, especially in the warm months of the year.

Don’t walk barefoot, even in your own house. Sharp objects, children’s toys or small pebbles brought in by shoes and hidden in the carpet can lead to foot trauma which may not be noticed until it is too late. Walking with open sandals or in socks only, though better than going barefoot, does not give you adequate protection.

Don’t use anything harsher than mild soap. That means never using any sharp object such as a file, razor or stiff brushes. You should never use chemical products such as deodorants, sprays or talc on your feet.

Check your shoes for small particles, such as pebbles, before putting them on each morning. This is easily done by putting your hand in and feeling the bottom of the shoe. Your shoe should then be turned upside-down and shaken to remove any hidden or unfound objects. Remember that in some old shoes the nails holding on the sole can begin to stick through inside the shoe and can damage the foot.

Toe nails must be cut regularly with nail scissors, but should not be trimmed too short. Soaking for a few minutes will soften nails before cutting and will help prevent cracking. If your nails tend to crack when cut, if there are signs of thickening and fungus build-up under the nail, if nails are crumbly or discoloured or if your vision is impaired, your nails should be cut by someone else trained to do it correctly. Nails should be trimmed with straight, not curved, edges.



Check regularly for healthy feet

Remember, as soon as you notice a problem on your foot such as an ulcer or infection, visit your Doctor as soon as possible. If treated immediately and correctly, most foot problems can be controlled.



Remember if you are on holiday not to walk barefoot on hot sand.

Pack a pair of beach sandals to save your feet.



Take extra care in winter when rain, snow and cold weather will take their toll on shoes and feet.

It's worth investing in a good pair of waterproof boots.

Make sure your feet are always dry and warm.

Don't forget to ask your Diabetes Educator about our range of booklets.



Customer Service
1.866.979.9408

Your healthcare team contact details:

Names: _____

Tel: _____



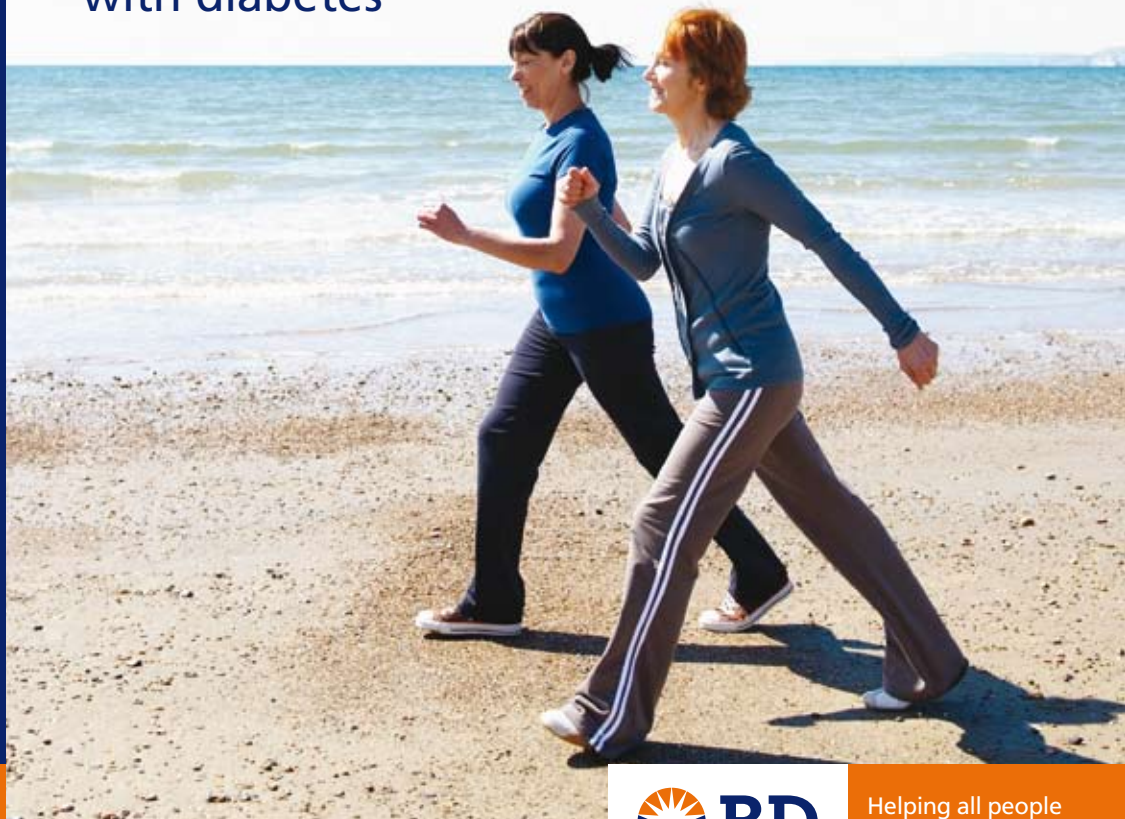
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live healthy lives

Recommendations adapted from Canadian Diabetes Association 2008
Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Diabetes in Canada.
Appendix 5. Diabetes and Foot Care: A Patients Checklist.

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Living Well with diabetes





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Feet are something we all tend to take for granted, just appendages at the end of our legs that help us balance! If you have diabetes however, feet assume a greater importance in your life because of your vulnerability to foot problems, which, if not checked, can lead to greater problems with your legs.