

Diabetes: Inspecting Your Feet

Diabetes increases your chances of developing foot problems. So inspect your feet every day. This helps you find small skin irritations before they become serious infections. If you have trouble seeing the bottoms of your feet, use a mirror or ask a family member or friend to help.



Pressure spots on the bottom of the foot are common areas where problems develop.

How to check your feet

Below are tips to help you look for foot problems. Try to check your feet at the same time each day, such as when you get out of bed in the morning:

- **Check the top of each foot.** The tops of toes, back of the heel, and outer edge of the foot can get a lot of rubbing from poor-fitting shoes.
- **Check the bottom of each foot.** Daily wear and tear often leads to problems at pressure spots.
- **Check the toes and nails.** Fungal infections often occur between toes. Toenail problems can also be a sign of fungal infections or lead to breaks in the skin.
- **Check your shoes, too.** Loose objects inside a shoe can injure the foot. Use your hand to feel inside your shoes for things like pebbles, loose stitching, or rough areas that could irritate your skin.

Warning signs

Look for any color changes in the foot. Redness with streaks can signal a severe infection, which needs immediate medical attention. **Tell your doctor right away if you have any of these problems:**

- **Swelling**, sometimes with color changes, may be a sign of poor blood flow or infection. Symptoms include tenderness and an increase in the size of your foot.
- **Warm or hot areas** on your feet may be signs of infection. A foot that is cold may not be getting enough blood.
- **Sensations** such as burning, tingling, or “pins and needles” can be signs of a problem. Also check for areas that may be numb.
- **Hot spots** are caused by friction or pressure. Look for hot spots in areas that get a lot of rubbing. Hot spots can turn into blisters, calluses, or sores.
- **Cracks and sores** are caused by dry or irritated skin. They are a sign that the skin is breaking down, which can lead to infection.
- **Toenail problems** to watch for include nails growing into the skin (ingrown toenail) and causing redness or pain. Thick, yellow, or discolored nails can signal a fungal infection.
- **Drainage and odor** can develop from untreated sores and ulcers. Call your doctor right away if you notice white or yellow drainage, bleeding, or unpleasant odor.