

Summer Tips for Diabetic Foot Health

Proper foot care and preventative maintenance are important all year round. However, there are some concerns specific for the summer months along with solutions to keep your feet healthy.

- **Avoid the temptation to go barefoot outside.** With warmer weather, you may enjoy going barefoot. This can cause foot problems for anyone, but when you have diabetes, these problems can be very serious. Going barefoot outside puts you at risk for:
 - ▶ puncture wounds
 - ▶ fire ant and other insect bites
 - ▶ cuts
 - ▶ sprains or fractures



When your foot is not protected, any break in your skin could lead to infection. Infections can be caused by bacteria, but also viruses can enter through broken skin causing plantar warts. A few small warts can enlarge and multiply over time. They can be painful if you have good sensation in your feet. But if you have lost the sense of feeling in your feet due to diabetic neuropathy or nerve damage, you may not recognize them. Athlete's foot (fungus) and yeast infections can occur the same way and may affect your skin and toenails. Once your skin or nails become infected with athlete's foot, yeasts, or plantar warts, they are more prone to bacterial infections. Bacteria can more easily enter your skin and extend to tendon and bone.

- **Wear protective shoes.** Prevent injury by wearing protective shoes such as good walking shoes or gym shoes. Rigid, supportive sandals or clogs are reasonable around the pool.
- **Avoid going barefoot indoors.** Injuries to bare feet aren't limited to the outdoors. Barefoot means no protective shoes, so wearing socks or flimsy house slippers is still considered barefoot and dangerous. Injuries from broken glass or ceramics, insulin needles, sewing needles, and metal bed frames/legs are frequent injuries that you can avoid by wearing clogs or rigid sandals in the house.
- **Inspect your feet and shoes daily.** Keep your feet healthy by inspecting your feet visually and manually twice a day, preferably after lunch and dinner. Use your hands and your eyes to inspect your feet for areas of redness, blisters, calluses, corns, cuts, excessive moisture, cracks in the skin, and areas of warmth. Put your hand inside your shoes before putting them on to check for foreign objects that may have found their way inside your shoe. If you have decreased sensation in your feet, these objects can cause holes in the skin (ulcers) or skin breakdown and infection.
- **Care for your skin.** If your feet are dry and scaling, use a moisturizing cream to prevent cracking. If your feet perspire, use an antifungal powder. Clean your feet daily with soap and water, pat dry, and apply an over-the-counter antifungal powder over the summer. This is necessary even if you wear shoes regularly, since fungi prefer dark and moist environments like your sweaty summer shoes.
- **Summer activities require special care:**
 - ▶ At the beach - wear clogs, walking shoes, or rigid sandals when walking on hot, abrasive sand or when crossing hot asphalt parking lots!
 - ▶ Swimming - consider aqua shoes when swimming in pools if the surface of the pool is gritty or abrasive.
 - ▶ Cooking and grilling - closed-toe shoes are mandatory when cooking or grilling to prevent burns to your feet.

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