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DIABETES AND FOOT CARE

ASCENSIA™ CARE HEALTH FACTS



A very important part of good diabetes control is the proper care of your feet. You can reduce or avoid serious problems with good foot care.

Your healthcare team will be able to answer any questions you may have about foot and skin care, and help you to make the right choices for you. Just remember – the power to manage your diabetes is in your hands.

For more information about Ascensia™ Diabetes Care Solutions from Bayer, or help with Reimbursement for your testing supplies, call our toll-free Customer Service Help Line at 1-800-348-8100 (24 hours, 7 days a week).

You can also visit our web sites at:
www.ascensia.com
www.bayercaresdiabetes.com
www.ascensiadreamfund.com



Diabetes and Foot Care

Living with diabetes makes it even more important to take care of your personal health care needs. This is especially true for the care of your feet.

People who have diabetes are more likely to have problems with poor circulation or a loss of sensation in the feet. This can lead to a variety of foot problems including dry skin, cracked heels, heavy callus formation, changes in the shape of the foot, and skin ulcers. The good news is that if you know how to take care of your feet, you may be able to lessen or even prevent these problems.

Poor circulation of the blood results in less oxygen reaching the cells in the feet. If this happens you may experience changes in nail growth, painful foot ulcers and slower healing.

As well, some people with diabetes may have **nerve damage** in the feet, causing problems with sensation. This typically occurs as a result of **poor blood sugar control** over an extended period of time. Loss of nerve function means that you may have little or no sensitivity in your feet to temperature, pressure or pain. If your feet get too hot, such as with the use of a hot water bottle or hot bath water, your feet can suffer a burn and you will not feel it. You may not feel injuries, such as blisters developing, if your shoes are too tight. You may not feel anything when you step on a sharp object. This loss of sensation makes the skin of the feet vulnerable and damage can occur without you being aware of it.

How to Take Care of Your Feet

There are some simple steps you can take to avoid injury and reduce the risk of damage to your feet. Spending some time caring for your feet on a regular basis can help keep them healthy.

Inspecting Your Feet:

- **Check your feet daily.** This includes the top and bottom of your feet and between each of your toes. If you have difficulty bending, use a mirror to examine the bottoms of your feet or have someone help you.
- **Look at your feet in a place with good lighting.** A good time to do this is after you take a bath or shower.
- **Check for changes.** Look for cuts, scratches, blisters, calluses, corns, ingrown toenails or signs of infection. Also look for white, moist, wrinkly skin, especially between the toes.
- **Feel for increased heat in the skin.** Hot spots may suggest the presence of underlying infection or inflammation. If you have nerve damage in your foot, there may be little or no pain to alert you to these problems.

Any concerns should be addressed promptly by your healthcare professional.

Bathing:

- **Keep your feet clean.** Wash them daily with a soft warm washcloth and a mild soap. Remember to check the water temperature with your wrist or elbow to ensure that the water is not too hot to avoid burning your feet.
- **Do not soak your feet** in water or any other solution. Soaking will only cause your skin to dry out more.
- **To dry your feet** use a soft towel, remembering to dry between each and every one of your toes. Do not put lotion between your toes, and never use a hair dryer to dry your feet.
- **Apply lotion** to the tops and bottoms of your feet after every wash. A mild 5-10% UREA-based lotion will help reduce skin dryness.



Corns and Calluses:

Feet develop corns and calluses as a way of protecting your skin against pressure or friction. This may happen if you have poorly fitting shoes, or an improper gait. If calluses or corns develop they will add to the problem, causing you further discomfort.

- **To get rid of corns and calluses** you must reduce the pressure on your feet. This will often involve obtaining proper, well-fitting footwear and perhaps the use of special insoles in your shoes. The insoles will more evenly distribute your body weight over the sole of your foot.
- **For mild callus buildup**, when the foot is dry gently file away any callused area with a pumice stone. Afterwards, apply lotion to all callused areas to keep the callus flexible and stop it from cracking.
- **Avoid using do-it-yourself corn or callus removers.** Do not use corn pads.
- **Never cut your corns or calluses with a razor blade.** For thick corns or calluses, visit a podiatrist or other qualified healthcare professional to have them removed, and discuss prevention of future calluses.

Toenails:

- **Keep your toenails properly trimmed and smooth.** Use blunt scissors to cut the nail straight across and then file the corners round with an emery board. Do not cut the nails too short; always leave about 1/16 to 1/8 of an inch of free nail beyond the end of your toe. The best time to cut your nails is after bathing when they are soft and easy to trim.
- **If you have any problem reaching your nails** easily, or if your nails are thick and more difficult to cut, seek help from a healthcare professional trained to manage nails, such as a podiatrist.
- If you develop an **ingrown toenail**, seek medical attention. Do not try to treat it yourself.

Socks:

Wear **clean socks** every day. A sock that is at least 80% cotton or wool is best to absorb the perspiration and allow the skin to breathe. Avoid nylon in socks or stockings. Socks should **fit well**, without tight elastic, especially at the top. Avoid socks with bulky seams.



Shoes:

- **Never walk barefoot at home or outside.** Wear shoes and socks in the house and outside every day to protect and support your feet. Before you put on your shoes, always shake them out and then carefully feel inside for stones or rough spots that might hurt your feet.

It is a good idea to keep a pair of slippers beside your bed in case you need to get up in the night. That way they will be handy for you to put on.
- **Proper shoes are important.** Shoes should have a thick, flexible rubber sole with a closed toe and heel. The toe box should be wide and deep enough to accommodate your toes. Avoid shoes with a pointed toe. The inside lining of the shoes should not have ridges, wrinkles or seams. Lace-up or Velcro brand closure shoes are best; try to avoid slip-on shoes.
- **Shop for shoes** when your feet are the largest – afternoons are better than early morning. Avoid shoes that are too tight or pinch. If you are shopping for new shoes and you have numb feet, cut out an outline of each foot from stiff paper, and insert the outline into the pair of shoes you are thinking of buying to help you determine if they fit.
- Wear **new shoes** for only short periods at first (maximum of 1-2 hours a day) and carefully inspect your feet after wearing the shoes to look for rubbed, red spots that might indicate a problem area.

Circulation:

- **If you smoke – quit.** Smoking damages blood vessels and increases the risk of circulation problems in people with diabetes.
- **Exercise each day if you are able.** Also, don't sit in one position for too long. Move your legs and feet every few minutes, and avoid crossing your knees or ankles for long periods of time.
- **Wear warm socks, shoes or boots** when you are outside in the winter to avoid frostbite. Remember, the temperature sensation in your feet may not be reliable.
- **Avoid using heating pads or hot water bottles** that can burn the skin. Use wool socks to keep your feet warm instead.



Treatment of Injuries:

- If you **stumble or bump into a hard object**, look at your feet to be sure that there is no damage. If you have poor sensation in your feet, you may not feel any pain that normally makes you aware of a serious injury.
- If **your foot is injured**, refrain from walking on it even if it doesn't hurt, as that can cause more damage.

- **Treat blisters, cuts and scratches right away.** Never use strong chemicals such as boric acid, hydrogen peroxide, or any antiseptic. Such chemicals can actually damage healing tissue. Do not open blisters yourself as it can lead to infections. Simply clean the wound with soap and water and consult your healthcare professional regarding further treatment. Cover all open injuries with a sterile dressing.
- **Call your doctor** if there is any sign of heat, redness, swelling, pus or pain in or around an **open sore**.

Blood Sugar Management

Keeping your blood sugar levels close to normal (70 – 140 mg/dL) will reduce your risk of developing complications. Once you have an injury to your feet, it is necessary to maintain good blood sugar levels in order for the injury to heal. Monitor your blood sugar levels three to four times per day.

Professional Care for Your Feet

Your feet require regular attention. Make sure that your doctor or diabetes educator checks your feet during *every* visit. It is helpful to remove your shoes and socks while waiting for the doctor to enter the exam room. Always seek help from a healthcare professional at the first sign of a problem.

Podiatrists are healthcare professionals who specialize in the care and treatment of your feet. These specialists can treat your foot problems, or fit you with special shoes or inserts if you require them.

How Moisturizers Work

Creams and moisturizers contain a combination of oils and moisture. They cover the skin to prevent the loss of moisture already present in the skin. Petroleum-based creams help slow down the moisture loss.

People with diabetes often have dry skin that is low in moisture content. Simply retaining the moisture is not enough. UREA-based creams attract moisture below the surface of the skin and help to prevent moisture loss. Washing will not alter the effectiveness of the cream and if used as directed the moisturizer will last between applications. See the following chart for UREA concentration in Dermal Therapy™ creams.

Make Skin Care Part of Your Everyday Routine

Dermal Therapy™ products actively restore moisture and results in smooth, healthy-looking skin. To help you with your foot care and other skin care needs, the following chart will help you select the right product for your needs. These products can be found at your local pharmacy in the Hand and Body or Diabetes section. If you have difficulty locating Dermal Therapy™ Skin care Products call 1-800-248-2637.

Symptom	Product	Description	UREA Content
Cracked Dry Heels	Heel Care	Moisturizes and softens hard, dry callused heels and feet.	25% UREA
Lancet Hardened Fingertips (Characteristic of frequent tester)	Finger Care	Moisturizes and softens lancet-hardened finger tips, and dry cuticles.	20% UREA
Dry Hands, Elbows & Knees (Characteristic of diabetes)	Hand, Elbow and Knee Cream	This unique 15% UREA and Silk Protein cream effectively moisturizes these problem areas.	15% UREA
Overall Dry Itchy Skin	Extra Strength Body Lotion	The combination of UREA and Silk Protein moisturizer enables very dry skin to feel smooth again.	10% UREA
Hot Tired Feet	Foot Massage Cream	Soothes and refreshes hot, tired feet. Formulated using camphor, menthol, mint and other ingredients.	1% UREA



™ D.T.R. Dermal Therapy Research Inc.,
London, Ontario, Canada