

WHAT DOES DIABETES HAVE TO DO WITH YOUR FEET?



DEAR PATIENT,

Diabetes can cause damage to vessels and nerves. Frequently, your feet are affected, too. Your doctor will describe this condition as Diabetic Foot Syndrome or talk about foot complications. You can, however, avoid these complications by observing a few basic rules.

► RISK FACTORS FOR YOUR FEET

A number of factors can increase the risk of foot complications. When you for example:

- suffer from inflammatory joint complaints
- have difficulty moving your joints
- have poor vision
- frequently walk around outside in your bare feet
- wear unsuitable shoes
- neglect your foot care
- suffer from calluses, ingrown toenails, bunions or warts, the treatment of which may lead to injuries
- are on medication that weakens your immune system
- lead an unhealthy lifestyle (like smoking, drinking a lot of alcohol or scarcely getting any physical exercise).

► NECESSARY EXAMINATIONS

If you have no other complaints, you should go for a medical examination by your doctor at least once a year. Sometimes these examinations have to be conducted at shorter intervals. Your doctor will look at your feet, socks/tights and shoes.

► TREATMENT

- In the case of certain abnormalities, orthopaedic shoes or perhaps crutches may be necessary to reduce pressure.
- Good care of any wounds is important. This includes, for instance, cleaning the wound surface and changing bandages regularly. You should always show any injury to your feet to your doctor.
- In the case of inflammation it may be necessary for you to take a course of antibiotics for a limited period of time. This depends on the severity of the infection.
- Diabetic foot syndrome encompasses various diseases. This is why you undergo treatment not only for your feet and your diabetes but also for the underlying disease that led to the syndrome. Some examples are polyneuropathy, a form of nerve damage or peripheral occlusive disease, a form of impaired circulation.

PATIENT INFORMATION

▶ Diabetes and Your Feet

▶ WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Check your feet daily and keep an eye out for blisters, reddening, cracks or pressure points.
- Be sure to wear wide, high-sided shoes with flat heels, relatively rigid soles and soft uppers.
- When buying shoes make sure that they don't rub or pinch your feet in any way.
- Wear seamless socks with a high cotton content and change them daily.
- Wash your feet daily with lukewarm water (37° C up to 38° C) for 3 to 5 minutes.
- The drier your feet are, the more frequently you should apply foot care products to them.
- To moisturise your feet, use foot care lotions or mousse that contain urea.
- Do not use baby oil, zinc ointments, greasy ointments or powder.
- Do not cut your toenails with sharp nail scissors but file them straight.
- Use a pumice stone not a callus-removing tool to get rid of rough skin and calluses. Regular medical foot care by a podiatrist (foot doctor) is even more effective.

You can attend a diabetes management programme (DMP Diabetes). The goal is to co-ordinate treatment by your family doctor and specialists. Talk to your doctor about this option.

▶ MORE INFORMATION

This Patient Information is based on the latest scientific findings and sums up the most important points from the Patient Guideline "Foot Complications in conjunction with Diabetes".

Other useful links

PatientenLeitlinie "Fußkomplikationen bei Diabetes": (Patient Guideline "Foot Complications in conjunction with Diabetes")
www.versorgungsleitlinien.de/patienten

Self-help organisations and co-operation partners involved in the Patient Guideline:

www.patienten-information.de/patientenbeteiligung/selbsthilfe
www.azq.de/pf

Self-help contact

You can find out from NAKOS (national contact and information office for the encouragement and support of self-help groups) where there is a self-help group in your area. www.nakos.de, Tel.: 030 3101 8960

Patient Guidelines

Patient Guidelines translate the treatment recommendations in medical guidelines into everyday language that can be understood by ordinary people. They provide important background information on the causes, examination methods and treatment of a disease. The BÄK (German Medical Association), the KBV (National Associations of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians) and the AWMF (Association of Scientific Medical Societies) working group are the co-ordinators of the programme for the development of medical guidelines ("National Medical Guidelines") and the respective patient versions.

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