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Diabetic Foot Care Guidelines

To avoid serious foot problems that could result in losing a toe, foot, or leg, be sure to follow these guidelines.

Inspect your feet daily. Check for cuts, blisters, redness, swelling, or nail problems. Use a magnifying hand mirror to look at the bottom of your feet. Call your doctor if you notice anything. (If your eyesight is poor, have someone else do it for you.)

Wash your feet in lukewarm (not hot!) water. Keep your feet clean by washing them daily. But only use lukewarm water—the temperature you'd use on a newborn baby.

Be gentle when bathing your feet. Wash them using a soft washcloth or sponge. Dry by blotting or patting—and make sure to carefully dry between the toes.

Moisturize your feet—but not between your toes. Use a moisturizer daily to keep dry skin from itching or cracking. But DON'T moisturize between the toes—this could encourage a fungal infection.

Cut nails carefully—and straight across. Also, file the edges. Don't cut them too short, since this could lead to ingrown toe nails.

Never trim corns or calluses. No "bathroom surgery"—let your doctor do the job.

Wear clean, dry socks. Change them daily.

Avoid the wrong type of socks. Avoid tight elastic bands (they reduce circulation). Don't wear thick or bulky socks (they can fit poorly and irritate the skin).

Wear socks to bed. If your feet get cold at night, wear socks. NEVER use a heating pad or hot water bottle.

Shake out your shoes and inspect the inside before wearing. Remember, you may not feel a pebble—so always shake out your shoes before putting them on.

Keep your feet warm and dry. Don't get your feet wet in snow or rain. Wear warm socks and shoes in winter.

Never walk barefoot. Not even at home! You could step on something and get a scratch or cut.

Take care of your diabetes. Keep your blood sugar levels under control.

Don't smoke. Smoking restricts blood flow in your feet.

Have your sense of feeling tested. Doctor Offutt will perform various tests to see if you've lost any feeling.

Observe for changes in circulation. Pay attention to the color of your toes. If they turn red, pink, or purplish when your legs hang down while sitting, poor circulation may be a problem.

Don't ignore leg pain. Pain in the leg that occurs at night or with a little activity could mean you have a blocked artery. Seek care immediately.

