

Holiday feet

Research has shown that there is a greater risk of foot ulceration that can lead to serious complications during holidays. This is especially true in hot countries.

The main causes of holiday ulcers are:

- Direct trauma
- Unaccustomed exercise
- Walking barefoot on the beach or in the sea
- Burns from walking barefoot on hot pavements or sand

To reduce the risk of foot problems on your holiday:

- Feet can swell during flights so it is important to stay active.
- Check your feet every day
- Avoid walking barefoot
- Wear protective swim shoes when at the beach or round the pool
- Take a first aid kit containing antiseptic wipes and sterile dressings
- Wear a high-factor sun cream on your feet to prevent burns

Key points

- Daily foot checks ensure that any problems are identified quickly
- Seek advice or treatment from a healthcare professional if you have any concerns
- Never underestimate the speed at which a minor foot wound can become limb or life-threatening.

Useful links

Diabetes UK

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/>

Useful information on diabetes and how to check your feet for neuropathy

Independent Diabetes Trust

<https://www.iddt.org/publications>

Leaflets are available.



HCS-LFT-0533-01

February 2020

Gouvèrnément d'Jèrri



Health and Community Services

Patient Information

Diabetes and Your Feet

This leaflet is for people diagnosed with diabetes. It gives important information about how diabetes can affect your feet and how to take care of them.

Podiatry Department
Jersey General Hospital
01534 442080

Gouvèrnément d'Jèrri

How diabetes affects feet

High blood sugar can cause damage to the nerves (sensation) and blood supply (circulation) in your feet. Loss of sensation can include the inability to detect temperature or pain and can have an effect on balance. It can also lead to unusual sensations including pain and burning.

These changes can be very gradual and you may not initially notice them. They can result in ulceration, infection and amputation. However, regular foot care and good blood glucose control can reduce the risks.

What you can do

Controlling your diabetes, cholesterol and blood pressure, and having your feet screened every year by a suitably-trained professional, will help to reduce the risk of developing problems with your feet.

If problems are identified, then you will be given further advice and information.

If you smoke, you are strongly advised to stop.

If you follow the simple advice in this leaflet, you should be able to identify foot problems and know what to do if you have any concerns.

Cutting your toenails

If you have been advised by your consultant or your GP not to cut your

toenails yourself, then you should see a podiatrist. However, if there is no reason why you should not cut your toenails, then this is how you should do it:

- follow the shape of the toe when cutting.
- leave no sharp edges
- nails are for protection, so do not cut them too short
- **never** cut down the sides
- if you have in-growing toenails or you suspect a nail infection, don't treat it yourself, see a podiatrist

Golden rules

- never go barefoot
- keep your feet dry, especially between the toes
- moisturise your skin so that your feet do not get dry or cracked (not between toes)
- wash your feet daily using lukewarm water
- do not use heating pads, hot water bottles, iodine, epsom salts or alcohol

Footwear

In addition to checking your feet every day, you should also check your footwear; looking for anything which may have penetrated the sole, or any damaged areas within the shoes.

It is advisable to ensure that your footwear is well fitting with enough width and depth to accommodate your toes and that any socks you wear are seamless or with soft seams, to prevent skin rubs to your toes.

If you find a blister or wound

If you find a blister, cover with a sterile dressing and keep the dressing on and dry. Make an appointment with a podiatrist.

If there's any redness, swelling or heat on the foot (cellulitis), you may need antibiotics. Make an appointment to see your GP as soon as possible.

If you have cellulitis along with any flu-like symptoms, attend Emergency Department. If you have any unusual discolouration, arrange to see your GP or podiatrist.

Don't underestimate the rate at which a small wound could become limb or life-threatening.

Podiatry access in Jersey

Podiatrists are listed in the yellow pages of the Jersey Directory under 'Chiropodists and Podiatrists'. These private practitioners are accessible to all. Podiatry is also available on the Pension Plus scheme, subject to eligibility.

For patients with foot wounds / infections or those diagnosed with 'high risk' feet, podiatry services are available at Jersey General Hospital and at the Diabetes Centre.

Hospital podiatry is only available following an appropriate referral from a health care professional.