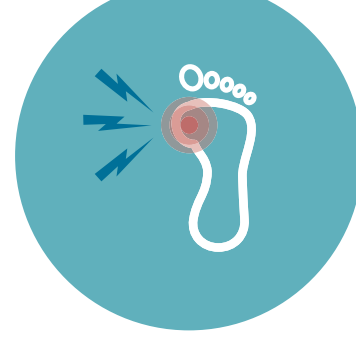


YOUR CARE POLMED

October 2020



Diabetes working on your nerves?



50% of diabetics will battle nerve damage (medically known as diabetic peripheral neuropathy).

Therefore, it's important to appropriately manage this condition, as failing to do so can have dire consequences on your health.

THE EFFECTS OF NERVE DAMAGE

Nerve damage occurs when blood sugar levels are constantly high. This can lead to pain, tingling and loss of feeling in the feet. Nerve damage can also increase the risk for:

- Poor vision
- Weakness in your hands
- Severe stomach pain
- Digestive problems
- Foot ulcers
- Foot infections
- Amputations



DIABETES AND FOOT CARE

Below we share guidelines about how a diabetic should and should not care for their feet.

DO THIS

DON'T DO THIS



Inspect your feet daily



Ignore leg pain or loss of sensation



Wear clean and dry seamless socks



Walk around barefoot



Take note of any calluses, warts and corns to tell your doctor

• Trim calluses, warts or corns yourself
• Use home remedies for sores, calluses or warts



• Check the water's warmth with your elbow
• Gently wash your feet in lukewarm water with a washcloth or sponge



• Wash your feet in hot water
• Avoid drying your feet thoroughly when they get wet



Warm your environment rather than your feet



Use heating appliances or hot water bottles directly on your feet



• Always make sure there's enough space for your foot inside a shoe – check if you can move all your toes once the shoe is on and laced up
• If you must wear heeled shoes, choose heeled shoes that are no higher than 2 cm

• Wear tight socks and shoes
• Wear high-heeled shoes



Moisturise your feet



Apply the moisturiser between your toes as this can encourage a fungal infection



Exercise regularly to help reduce glucose levels:
• Walking, jogging, cycling and dancing can help to improve circulation
• Exercise for at least 150 minutes every week
• Aim to include strength training 2 to 3 times a week

Live a sedentary lifestyle as lack of exercise can increase your risk of nerve damage



• Take your medication as prescribed
• Make sure to refill your prescription when necessary



• Not take your medication as prescribed
• Not refill your prescription



Eat a diet rich in:
• Wholegrain foods (like barley, unrefined grains, nuts and legumes)
• Fruits low in sugar (such as kiwi and grapefruit)
• Green leafy vegetables

• Smoke or abuse illegal drugs
• Follow a diet high in processed foods, sugar and alcohol



Shake out your shoes before wearing them to remove any foreign objects

Wear your shoes without inspecting them – inside and out



Ensure you book your yearly check-up with a podiatrist to complete a foot examination and discuss any concerns

Miss your yearly check-up with a podiatrist



WHEN TO SEE A PODIATRIST (FOOT DOCTOR)

Podiatrists examine the feet of diabetics and advise them on how to keep them healthy, reducing complications like nerve damage, foot infections and amputations. Podiatrists may use surgical or non-surgical methods to treat foot-related diabetic complications.

If you begin to experience any of these symptoms, contact your doctor or a podiatrist:

- Legs or feet swelling
- Change in skin colour
- Burning or tingling sensation
- Loss of feeling in the feet
- Numbness in the toes
- Ingrown toenails
- Slow healing sores
- Cracks between toes
- Blisters
- Bunions
- Warts
- Corns
- Calluses
- Athlete's foot



People with diabetes need to properly manage their condition, and this includes taking care of their foot health. In doing so, they can help to reduce the risk of complications.

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If you have any questions or need more information, please call POLMED on 0860 765 633 (select the option for the Disease Management Programme), or send an email to polmeddisease@medscheme.co.za with your membership number and contact details.