

Understanding diabetic foot ulcers

A guide for people living with diabetes and their care partners

What is a diabetic foot ulcer?

A diabetic foot ulcer (DFU) is a sore or open wound on the foot that occurs more easily in people with current or previously diagnosed diabetes mellitus. This is due to **nerve damage** (neuropathy) and **poor blood flow** (ischemia), which makes it harder for wounds to heal and easier for infections to start.¹



Up to **1 in 3** people with diabetes may develop a foot ulcer in their life.²

Why it matters

- DFUs can lead to serious infections and even amputations if not treated properly.³
- Early detection and care can prevent most complications.

How can you prevent foot ulcers?

Screen your feet regularly

Get your feet checked by a health provider at least once a year - or more often if you're at higher risk.



Keep your blood sugar in check

Well-controlled blood sugar lowers the risk of foot ulcers and helps healing.



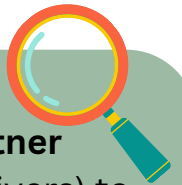
Wear proper footwear

- Avoid walking barefoot and use well-fitting shoes.
- Ask your health-care provider about special shoes if you have foot problems such as sores, bunions, pain and swelling.



Self-check at home

- Use a **mirror** or ask a **care partner** (family, friends or other caregivers) to help you check the bottoms of your feet daily.
- Watch for early signs such as **red spots**, **warmth**, **minor wounds** and **loss of sensation**.



Learn and practice self management

- Learn how to care for your feet, manage your diabetes and when to ask for help.
- Health providers may offer personalized strategies to support your goals.



Ways to support your care

01.

Virtual care options



- Ask about **telehealth** appointments if getting to a clinic is difficult. Many services are now available online or over the phone.
- Your health providers can provide information on how to interpret findings and when to seek immediate help.

Collaboration

02.

- Health providers are here to support you with personalized, respectful care. Ask your health providers to develop a **care plan** that fits your needs.
- **Care partners** such as family, friends or other caregivers can help you stay on track with daily care and appointments.



03.

Get a wound care team involved



- A **specialized wound care team** is comprised of nurses, chiropractors, physicians and other health providers with advanced training in wound care assessment and management who can provide expert care for complex foot issues.
- Ask your provider about referrals to a team if needed.



Tips for healthy feet

- Check your feet daily.
- Keep your blood sugar controlled.
- Don't ignore foot pain or injuries.
- Wear proper shoes.
- Get regular foot exams.
- Report any changes (cuts, sores, swelling) to your health provider right away.

References:

1. van Netten et al on behalf of International Working Group on the Diabetic Foot. Definitions and criteria for diabetes-related foot disease (IWGDF 2023 update). *Diabetes Metab Res Rev.* 2023 May 15:e3654.
2. Blanchette V, Patry J, Brousseau-Foley M, Todkar S, Libier S, Leclerc AM, et al. Diabetic foot complications among Indigenous peoples in Canada: a scoping review through the PROGRESS-PLUS equity lens. *Front Endocrinol.* 2023 Aug 14;14:1177020.
3. Wang X, Yuan CX, Xu B, Yu Z. Diabetic foot ulcers: Classification, risk factors and management. *World J Diabetes.* 2022;13(12):1049.

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