

Holiday feet

Diabetes is a lifelong condition which can cause foot problems. Some of these problems can occur because the nerves and blood vessels are damaged.

This can affect:

- ❖ the feeling in your feet (peripheral neuropathy); and
- ❖ the circulation in your feet (ischaemia).

These changes can be very gradual and you may not notice them. This is why it is very important that you check your feet regularly, especially when on holiday as you may be more active than usual.

Foot ulcers are breaks in the skin that struggle to heal. The development of foot ulcers in people with diabetes is serious as they are linked to an increased risk of heart attacks, strokes and foot amputation.

Controlling your diabetes, cholesterol and blood pressure, quitting smoking, increasing cardiovascular exercise and controlling weight helps to reduce the risk of these life- and limb-threatening problems.

This leaflet contains advice to help you to care for your feet yourself while enjoying your holiday.

Advice on keeping your feet healthy

On the journey

Long journeys can make your feet swell. Try to walk about every half hour if possible – even a short distance will help. This will keep the circulation moving and keep swelling down. Remember your feet may swell in heat, so make sure your shoes are not too tight.

Check your feet every day

You should check your feet at least once a day for any blisters, breaks in the skin, pain or any signs of infection such as swelling, heat or redness, just as you would at home.

Wash your feet every day

Wash your feet every day in warm water and with a mild soap. Rinse them thoroughly and dry them carefully, especially between the toes. Do not soak your feet as this can damage your skin.

Moisturise your feet every day

If your skin is dry, apply a moisturising cream every day, avoiding the areas between your toes. You may need to apply extra moisturising cream if your skin gets very dry in hot or cold weather.

Toenails

Carry on cutting your toenails as your podiatrist has advised you to.

Avoid walking barefoot

Always wear footwear, even on the beach. The sand can become very warm and you may burn your feet without realising. If you go into the sea, wear some sort of footwear such as plastic shoes to protect your feet.

Avoid wearing 'flip-flop' type footwear as this may cause blisters between your toes.

Prescription shoes

If you have been supplied with prescribed shoes, do not wear any other shoes during your holiday (except when you are in the sea).

Minor cuts and blisters

Take a small first-aid kit containing sterile gauze dressings and Micropore tape. If you get a small blister, cut or graze, use diluted antiseptic on a gauze swab to clean the wound and tape on a dry sterile gauze dressing. Do not use cotton wool.

Medications and prescriptions

Make sure that you pack any antibiotic prescriptions, dressings, insoles and footwear that have been prescribed and issued to you.

If you smoke, you are strongly advised to stop. Smoking affects your circulation and can increase the risk of amputation.

Avoid high or low temperatures

Protect your feet from sunburn with a high-factor sun-protection cream (factor 30 or above) or keep them covered. Do not use dark-coloured materials to protect your feet as they absorb heat and you could burn your feet.

If you have any concerns or discover any problems with your feet, contact the podiatry clinic or GP for advice immediately.

Happy feet will help you to enjoy your holiday