

## As a general guide

- Maintain acceptable blood sugar level control
- Don't smoke
- Exercise regularly
- Avoid barefoot walking
- Keep your feet clean
- Wear well-fitting shoes
- Cut and file nails carefully
- Have corns, calluses and other foot problems treated by a podiatrist
- Seek your podiatrist's advice if you have any foot concerns

### Remember:

- With altered sensation you may experience numbness in the feet. Cuts, blisters, ingrown toenails and corns may go unnoticed
- Reduced blood supply (poor circulation) can slow down the healing process
- PROTECT your feet from injury
- INSPECT your feet every day
- Have a REGULAR foot assessment

## About podiatrists

Podiatrists are highly skilled health professionals trained to deal with the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of medical and surgical conditions of the feet and lower limbs. Podiatrists have completed a Bachelor of Podiatry or higher degree, and are continually upgrading their skills and knowledge through further education and training.

## Where can I find a podiatrist?

Contact the Australasian Podiatry Council on (03) 9416 3111 or visit [www.apodc.com.au](http://www.apodc.com.au) to use the *FindaPodiatrist* feature.

Many health funds provide cover for podiatry services on their ancillary tables. Government funded services are available through the Department of Veterans' Affairs, some public hospitals and community health centres.

People with a chronic disease e.g. diabetes may be eligible for a Medicare rebate if a care plan is established through a GP.

# Diabetes



Cover photo by Heath Missen, The Age.



A foot health message from  
**Steel Blue** and the  
**Australasian Podiatry Council**  
ACN 008488 748

## What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition in which the amount of glucose (sugar) in the blood is too high because the body is unable to use it properly. This is because insulin is lacking or the body's way of converting glucose into energy is not working properly.

### There are two common forms of diabetes:

**Type 1** which usually starts in children and young adults. People with this type of diabetes require daily insulin injections.

**Type 2** is the most common and usually affects people over the age of 40 years.

## How diabetes can affect your feet

Your feet are supplied with blood to keep them healthy. They also have lots of nerves as a warning system. For example, if you have a stone in your shoe, nerves will send a message to your brain.

However, if your diabetes is poorly controlled for a long period of time, this may lead to:

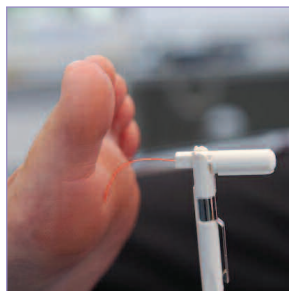
- Nerve damage which reduces feeling in the feet which is called peripheral neuropathy, and/or
- 'Poor circulation' which is called peripheral vascular disease.

Nerve damage may mean that you no longer notice the stone in your shoe, due to loss of feeling in your feet. This could then lead to an injury you can't feel, or a wound, and possibly infection.

If you have poor circulation, any injuries, wounds or infections to your feet (ie cuts, burns or scratches) will take longer to heal. This is due to less blood flowing into your feet. Blood provides energy to muscles and aids in healing any tissue damage.

If you have poor circulation, you will need to take extra care to protect your feet from injury and wounds.

Most foot problems in people who have diabetes occur when injuries and wounds – and often infections – go unnoticed and untreated, or when healing is delayed due to poor circulation.



*This is a standard monofilament test to assess the pressure sensitivity, or feeling, in your feet*



*With diabetes you may lose feeling in your feet and wounds can then occur without you knowing it. These can become foot ulcers*

## How can I detect any changes early?

A twelve monthly check by your podiatrist will help to detect any changes early – before they become a problem.

Your podiatrist will examine your circulation by feeling foot pulses. They will also examine sensation by testing pressure sensitivity, vibration and/or reflexes and other tests may be considered necessary.

Your podiatrist will also look for general foot conditions which may lead to future problems. They will work with you to show you how to monitor your own feet, in between consultations.

If your podiatrist finds you have a lack of sensation, poor circulation, a wound or infection, you will need more frequent care in the form of a tailored care plan.

*Your feet are supplied with blood to keep them healthy. They also have lots of nerves as a warning system.*



## To prevent problems

- Protect your feet from injury
- Inspect your feet every day (your podiatrist can show you how)
- See your podiatrist immediately if something is not healing or you find a red swollen area

## Footwear advice

The best type of footwear fits well and protects your feet. Wherever possible, wear shoes to avoid injury.

### Some other pointers:

- Where possible, wear lace-up shoes which are deep and broad enough especially at the toes
- Check inside your shoes for rough edges or exposed tacks – shake them out to make sure there is nothing inside
- Cotton hosiery, socks and tights, worn with leather upper shoes are good choices