



Step toward healing: A guide to diabetes foot ulcer care

This guide will give you and your caregiver practical advice to support your healing and to reduce the risk of a diabetes related foot ulcer coming back.



What is happening to my feet and why?

Understanding a diabetes related foot ulcer

We understand that a diabetes related foot ulcer can impact your life in many ways.

The good news is that with early care and attention, you can make a difference to your healing.

By knowing what to look for and caring for your feet every day, you can lower the risk of complications and keep yourself active, independent, and confident.

Why does this happen?

Over time, high blood sugar can damage both your nerves and your blood circulation, especially in your feet.

Reduced blood flow

When blood sugar stays high, it can damage the walls of your blood vessels, making them narrower and reducing blood flow.

With less blood reaching your feet, your skin and tissues don't get enough oxygen and nutrients. This can slow healing and increases the risk for infection.

Loss of sensation

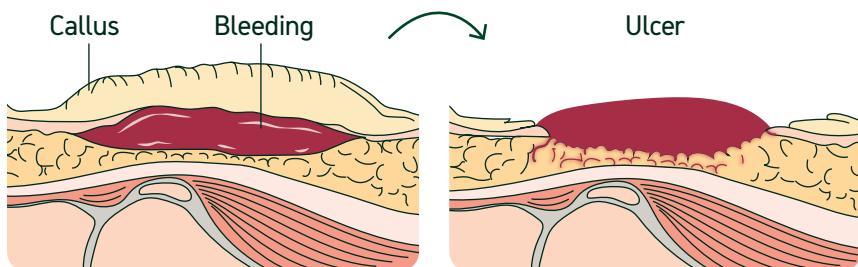
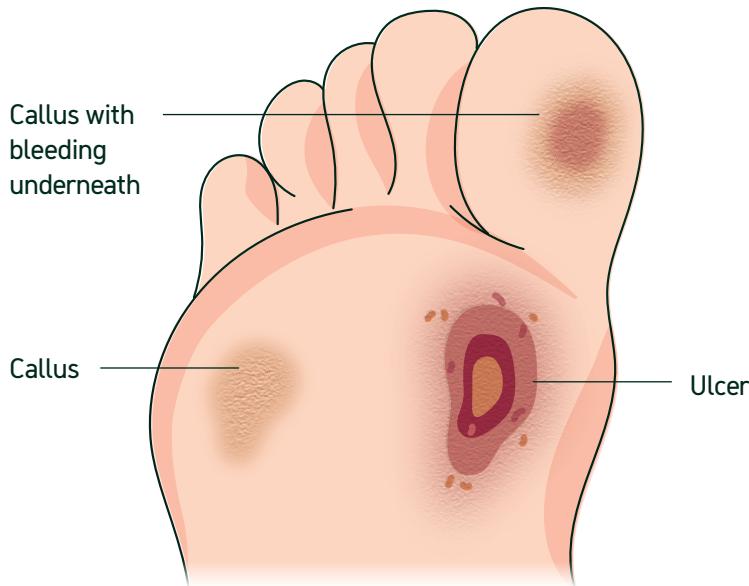
High blood sugar can also damage the nerves that carry messages to your brain. This means you may not feel pain that would make you aware of a problem.

- You may lose feeling in your feet and not notice pain, heat, or small injuries.
- Your foot muscles may weaken, sometimes changing the shape of your feet.
- Your feet may produce less sweat, leaving the skin dry and prone to cracks and splittings.

Daily care and early attention can protect your feet and help you focus on the moments that matter.

What are diabetes related foot ulcers?

Diabetes related foot ulcers are open ulcers that can form on the bottom of the foot. They often start with hard skin (callus). Pressure on the callus may cause bleeding under the skin and tissue damage, which can then turn into an ulcer.





What to look for



If you're experiencing a diabetic related foot ulcer, it is important to understand what to look for and when to ask for help.

Healing can look different depending on your skin tone, how deep the wound is, and how long you have had it. Noticing changes early can help you and your care team act quickly if something isn't right.

Morning and evening routine

Check your feet twice a day. If it's hard to see the bottoms of your feet, use a mirror or ask a family member or friend to help.

Look out for these changes:

Skin colour

Any changes in your skin colour for example a darkening or signs of redness or temperature

tingling, numb, or have a burning sensation

Dry, thick, or hard skin

Toe shape changes

Toes that start curling or clawing

Toenail problems

Nails that are very thick or thin, grow into the skin, or change colour

Heels

Dry, cracked skin, calluses, or open ulcers

Skin infections

Redness, itching, or peeling between the toes (athlete's foot)

Feeling

Any new pain, feet that are

Even small changes matter

Contact your healthcare team right away if you notice anything unusual.





Infected DFU



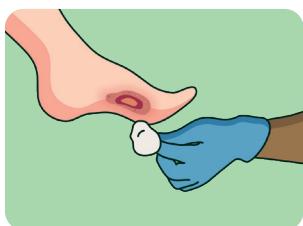
Progressing DFU

Tip: Take a daily photo of your ulcer. This helps you and your care team track progress and spot problems early - even small ones.

Dressing change

What to expect

Changing your dressing is an important part of caring for an ulcer. Most often, your clinician will change your dressing, but it is helpful to know what to expect and what each step involves.



1.

Cleansing and debridement: After removing the old dressing, your clinician will cleanse the wound and remove any dead tissue this is called debridement. This step helps the wound heal faster and reduces the risk of infection.



2.

Applying a new dressing: A new dressing is placed on the wound to maintain the right environment which is essential for healing.



3.

Secure the dressing: A bandage or a form of fixation will be applied to ensure the dressing stay in place.



4.

Offloading is critical! Offloading shoes or boots can help take the weight and pressure off your feet so your ulcer can heal. Your healthcare team will guide you on the best offloading option.



If there are times when you need to change the dressing at home, follow the steps carefully to keep the area clean and protected. You can scan the QR code here for a helpful video on how to safely change the dressing.

If you see any of these signs, call your clinician immediately or as soon as possible:

- Discoloured? Smelly? Wet?
- Is there swelling, change in shape or pain?

My notes

Use this space to write questions or observations.

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Offloading: helping your foot heal

To heal an ulcer, it's important to take pressure off the sore area. This is called offloading. Special shoes, boots, or inserts are designed to spread your weight more evenly and protect your foot from further damage.

Wearing your offloading device every time you stand or walk, gives your foot the best chance to heal.

Think of it as a protective shield that helps your foot rest and repair while you stay mobile.

If you have had ulcers before, offloading is very important for prevention. Offloading protects vulnerable areas and lowers the chance of new ulcers.

Tips for getting the best results when using the offloading device:



Always use your offloading device, indoors & outdoors



Don't walk barefoot, even at home



Keep the device clean and dry



Check your device daily for rubbing, pressure marks, or damage

Inform your caregiver or clinician if it feels uncomfortable or if you notice new pain, redness, or swelling.

Each step counts.

Each time you wear your offloading shoes, you're actively helping your foot heal and protecting yourself from future ulcers. It's a simple choice that builds confidence, keeps you moving, and supports the freedom to enjoy life on your feet.





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I never thought about the consequences, and I never thought that a wound that started as small as a fingernail could grow so much. No matter how much we tried, it wouldn't heal.

Angel – DFU Patient

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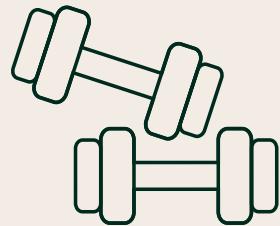
Patients with diabetes are not aware of their illness because it doesn't hurt.

Francisco – DFU Patient

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By taking small consistent steps - such as daily inspections and early reporting of any changes, you're helping reduce the chance of a diabetes related foot ulcer recurring.

Build your healthy habits



There are several things you can do to support your health to promote wound healing and reduce the risk of diabetic foot ulcer recurrence.

Ready to make a change to support your healing?

Power your feet with nutrients



Choose whole grains, proteins (like chicken, fish, or legumes), and plenty of vegetables. This helps keep your blood sugar levels stable.

For example: Breakfast: whole-grain toast, eggs, and a side of berries. Snack: handful of nuts or carrot sticks with hummus.



Avoid sugary drinks like soda or sweet tea.



Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated, to maintain good circulation and skin health, and to reduce the risk of skin cracks or dryness.



Include healthy fats like those from nuts, seeds, and olive oil to support overall body functions, like blood flow and nerve health.



Limit salt intake to prevent fluid retention, which could put additional pressure on your feet.

Check with your Dietitian for any nutritional advice.

Make movement part of your day

Staying active helps your circulation and overall health – but always follow the advice from your healthcare professional about what's safe for your feet.

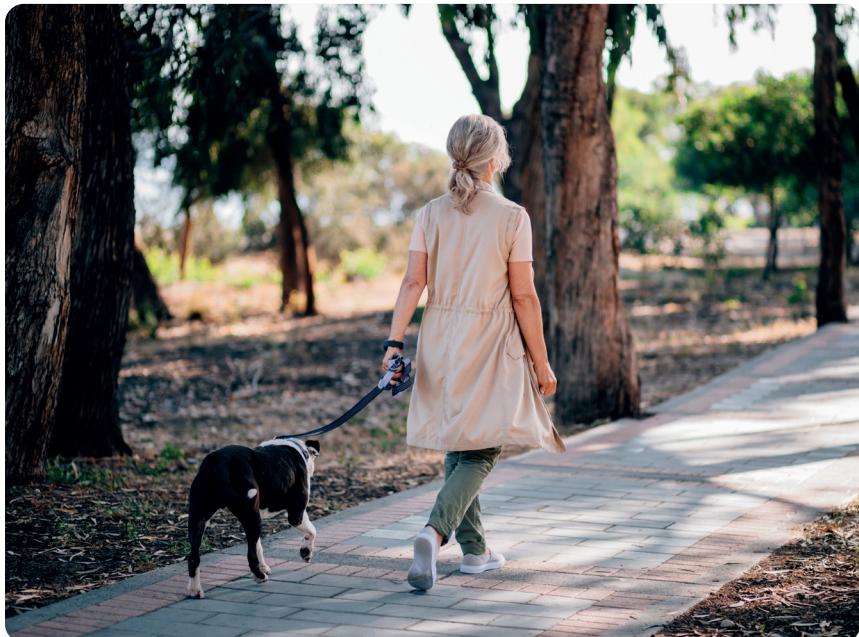
Aim for **30 minutes of gentle activity each day**, or whatever your care team recommends for you.



Walking: can increase/stimulate blood flow and promote healing. Make sure you wear your prescribed offloading shoes, insoles, or boots every time you walk – even at home.



Stretching: Stretch your legs and feet regularly to improve flexibility and prevent stiffness that could affect your posture.



Seated exercises (from a chair)

Always follow the advice from your healthcare professional about what's safe for your feet.



Ankle circles: Lift one foot slightly off the floor and gently rotate your ankle in a circle then switch directions. Repeat with the other foot.



Toe and heel lifts: While sitting, keep your heels on the floor and lift your toes up, then lower. Next, keep your toes on the floor and lift your heels up, then lower.

Why this helps



Improved circulation:
Enhanced blood flow ensures your feet receive the necessary nutrients and oxygen for healing.



Blood sugar control:
Regular activity helps regulate the blood sugar.



Stronger muscles and better balance:
Exercises for your legs and feet help build strength, improve balance and flexibility and reduce the risk of falls or foot injuries.

Always consult with your healthcare professional before starting any new exercise routine to ensure it's safe and appropriate for your individual health needs.

Looking after your overall health

Building a strong foundation for healing

Taking care of your general health plays an important role in helping your foot ulcer heal and in reducing the chances of it coming back.

Keep your blood sugar in target range. High blood sugar can slow healing and increase your risk of infection. Regular monitoring and sticking to your treatment plan can make a real difference.

If you smoke, try to cut down or quit. Smoking reduces blood flow to your feet, which makes it harder for wounds to heal. Your healthcare team can help you find support.

Manage your blood pressure and cholesterol. Keeping these under control helps protect the blood vessels and nerves in your feet, supporting healing and reducing future risk.

Take your medications as prescribed. This helps manage your diabetes, blood pressure, and cholesterol all of which are linked to foot health.

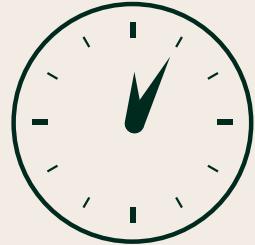
Eat well and stay as active as you can. Even small changes can support healing and boost your overall wellbeing. Ask your care team for advice that works for you.

Looking after your overall health not only supports the healing of your foot ulcer, but also helps you feel better day to day.

Small steps can make a difference and you don't have to do it alone. Your healthcare team is there to support you every step of the way.



Your 5-minute routine: morning & evening



Whether you are caring for your feet or supporting someone, these simple habits can help prevent problems before they develop to serious complications.



Morning ☀

1. Wash your feet gently with warm water (no hotter than 37°C).
2. Dry your feet thoroughly, especially between the toes.
3. Moisturise the tops and bottoms of your feet (but not between the toes).

4. Trim your nails straight across, leaving a small bit of nail past the tip of your toe.

5. Gently smooth the corners with a nail file. Avoid cutting into the corners to prevent ingrown nails.

If you find it hard to reach your feet, or if your nails are thick, yellow, or curved, visit a podiatrist.

Evening 🌙

1. Inspect your feet (use a mirror if needed).
2. Look for cuts, redness, blisters, or swelling.

3. Moisturise the tops and bottoms of your feet (but not between the toes) to keep them soft and prevent cracks.

4. Put on clean, soft socks for night time protection.

Inspect your shoes!

- Check with your hand inside the shoe to ensure there are no objects inside that you might not feel with your foot. Check the soles to remove any stones, screws and or nails as this can be a cause of injury.
- Wear well-fitting shoes and soft socks all the time.

• Never walk barefoot - not even indoors, to reduce the risk of injuring your feet.



Your foot care diary



Taking care of your feet - morning and evening

Taking a few minutes each morning and evening to look after your feet helps you stay ahead of any changes. Use this diary to note down what you see, how your feet feel, and anything you would like to ask your care team about.

These short check-ins can help you notice improvements, spot early warning signs, and stay confident in your healing journey.

Remember consistency is key, and your efforts truly matter.

Set reminders to inspect your feet and be proud of every step you take towards staying healthy.



Weekly reflection

Reflect on what went well this week? Did you notice improvement?

Reward yourself! After completing a week of tracking, treat yourself to something relaxing, a favourite hobby, music, or any small reward that feels good to you.

Set goals, track habits, and celebrate your wins. You're making strides toward healing!

Remember: Even small changes matter.
Reach out to your clinician if you need support.



Do

- Wear shoes at all times (indoors and outdoors)
- Moisturise daily (avoiding between the toes)
- Trim toenails straight across
- See a podiatrist/chiropodist regularly



Don't

- Ignore small wounds, pain, or changes on your feet
- Walk barefoot
- Use heating pads or hot water bottles
- Attempt to remove corns or calluses yourself

Foot care diary example:

Week 1

Write down your observations when taking care of your feet



AM check



PM check

DAY 1

No redness or swelling.

Skin looks normal.

Slight rubbing on right toe.

Small red patch on left foot.

Week 1

Write down your observations when taking care of your feet



AM check



PM check

DAY 1	
DAY 2	
DAY 3	
DAY 4	
DAY 5	
DAY 6	
DAY 7	

You and your healthcare professional should use this space to update on progress.

Week 2

Write down your observations when taking care of your feet



AM check



PM check

DAY 1

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DAY 2

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DAY 3

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DAY 4

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DAY 6

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DAY 7

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You and your healthcare professional should use this space to update on progress.

Week 3

Write down your observations when taking care of your feet



AM check



PM check

DAY 1	AM check	PM check
DAY 1		
DAY 2		
DAY 3		
DAY 4		
DAY 5		
DAY 6		
DAY 7		

You and your healthcare professional should use this space to update on progress.

Week 4

Write down your observations when taking care of your feet



AM check



PM check

DAY 1

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DAY 2

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DAY 3

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DAY 4

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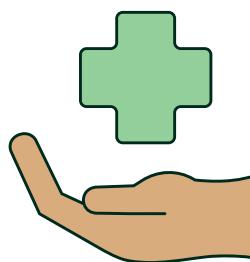
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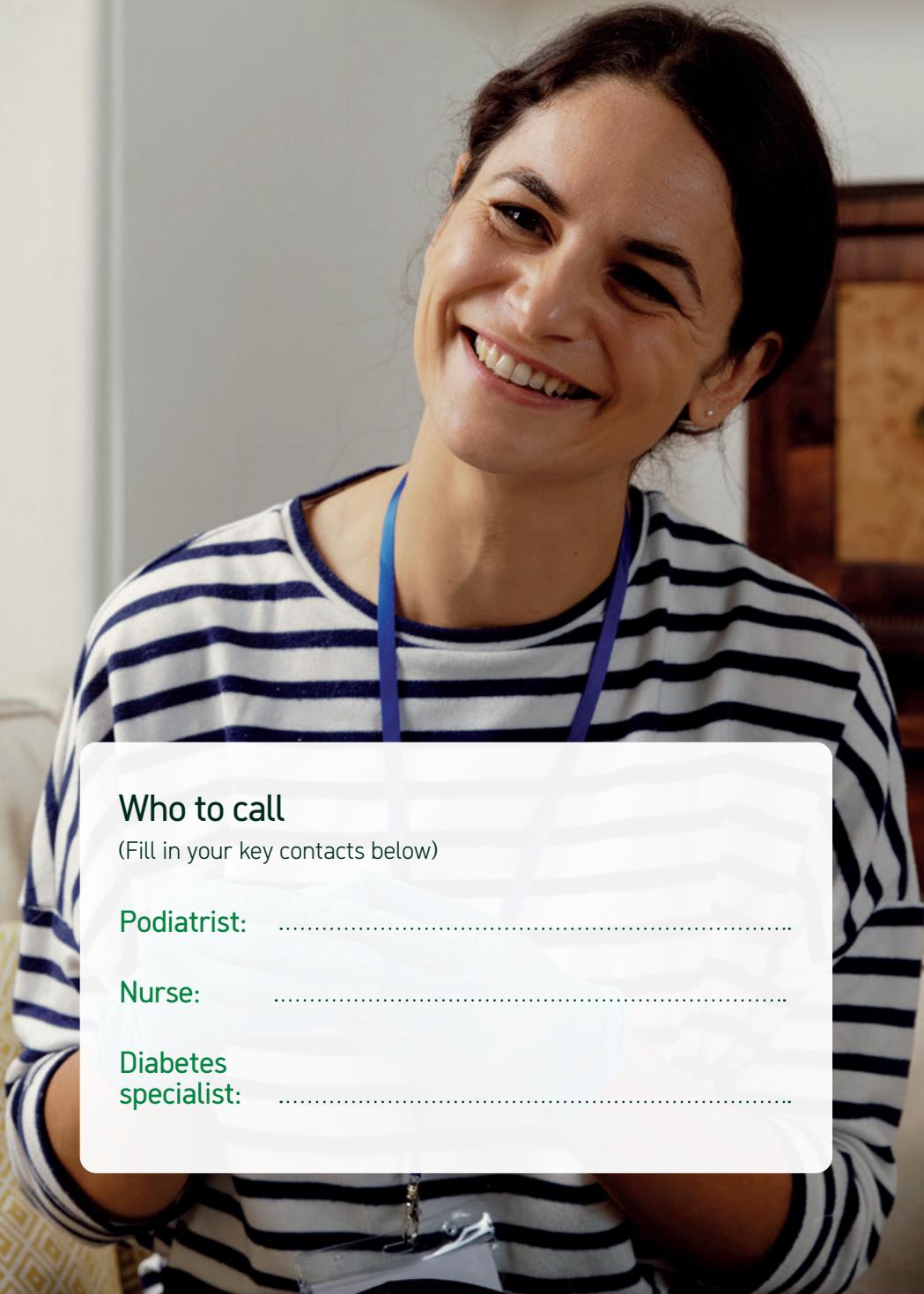
For your caregiver



Your support as a caregiver makes a difference. Whether you are a family member or a friend, you play a key role in protecting your loved ones' health.

- Care for yourself, too. Rest when you can, ask for help, and talk to a professional if it is overwhelming. When you feel well, you can give your best to the person you are supporting.
- Keep a shared diary to record how things are going. This builds confidence and keeps the healthcare team informed.
- Your care helps preserve mobility, dignity, and quality of life. **Thank you for walking this path together.**





Who to call

(Fill in your key contacts below)

Podiatrist:

Nurse:

Diabetes specialist:

Step forward in diabetes related foot ulcer care.

We drive change that improves the health and wellbeing of patients and those who care for them.

Find out more at www.molnlycke.com

Developed in collaboration with Andrea Gledhill | Consultant Podiatric Surgeon | Special interest in Limb Preservation

References: 1. iwgdfguidelines.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/IWGDF-Guidelines-2023.pdf 2. diabetesjournals.org/care/article/36/6/1613/33310/Adherence-to-Wearing-Prescription-Custom-Made 3. diabetes.org/newsroom/press-releases/american-diabetes-association-releases-standards-care-diabetes-2025 4. nice.org.uk/guidance/ng19 5. who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/diabetes#:text=A%20healthy%20diet%2C%20regular%20physical,screening%20and%20treatment%20for%20complications. 6. ndss.com.au/wp-content/uploads/diabetes-and-feet-toolkit.pdf

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