

SKIN, FOOT AND DENTAL CARE FOR PEOPLE WITH DIABETES

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Skin, Foot And Dental Care For People With Diabetes

Skin care

Skin problems related to diabetes range from itching to painful infections, but there is a lot you can do to keep from having these problems.

Nine easy steps to basic skin care:

- Bathe every day with mild soap and lukewarm water.
- Pat skin dry with a soft towel. Avoid rubbing. Dry between all skin folds.
- Use a small amount of lotion after bathing to prevent dry skin.
- Take extra care to avoid scratches or bruises.
- Wear gloves when you do work that might cause injury.
- Use a sunscreen lotion with SPF (sun protection factor) of 15 or higher to protect your skin from the sun.
- Dress warmly and avoid long exposure in very cold weather.
- Wash cuts and scrapes with soap and water. Cover with a bandage.
- Call your doctor if a cut or scratch does not heal or your skin is red, swollen, feels warm or hot, has pus, or produces bad-smelling drainage.

Foot care

Many people with diabetes lose the feeling in their feet (neuropathy). Therefore, they might not know they have an injury that can lead to serious problems, such as foot removal (amputation). By taking care of your feet, most serious problems can be prevented. If you have problems checking your own feet, have a family member or friend help you.

Ten easy steps to protect your feet:

- Check your feet every day for: dry or cracked skin, cuts, open sores, blisters, redness, swelling, corns, calluses, or toenail problems. Use a mirror if necessary. Report any problems to your doctor.
- Keep your feet clean and dry, especially between the toes.
- If your feet are dry or cracked, use a moisturizing lotion, but not between the toes.
- Cut your toenails straight across, not into the corners, and smooth with an emery board.
- Don't go barefoot. Wear shoes or slippers at all times.
- Wear comfortable shoes that fit well.
- Check inside your shoes for foreign objects or rough spots before putting on shoes.
- Always wear socks.
- Avoid using anything hot, such as heating pads, hot water bottles, hot tubs, or bath water. Check the temperature of bath water with your elbow not your foot.
- Take your shoes and socks off at every office visit to remind your doctor to check your feet.
- Also, never tape a dressing directly to the skin on your legs or feet. Instead, use a self-adherent bandage to avoid injuring the skin on your lower extremities.

Dental care

High blood sugar can cause dental problems such as gum disease and infections.

Eight easy steps to prevent gum disease:

- Check your blood sugar and keep it in your target range.
- See your dentist at least every six months.
- Tell your dentist you have diabetes.
- Brush your teeth at least twice a day.
- Use dental floss at least once a day to remove food particles and plaque from between your teeth.
- If you wear dentures, clean your dentures and rinse your mouth with mouthwash at least once a day.
- Don't smoke.
- Call your dentist if you have bleeding gums when you brush or eat, loose teeth, sores, patches, or ulcers in your mouth, dentures that don't fit properly, or bad breath or a bad taste in your mouth all the time.

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