How does diabetes affect your feet?

**Moderate risk foot**

You have been assessed as having a ‘moderate risk’ of developing diabetes related foot complications, such as ulcers or infections.

Diabetes is a long-term condition that requires constant management. It can cause foot problems because of damage to blood supply and nerves, particularly in your feet. The altered feeling in your feet is called ‘peripheral neuropathy’. Reduced blood supply in your feet is called ‘ischaemia’.

These changes occur silently and so gradually that you may not notice them occurring. This is why you are advised to have a podiatrist do a complete foot screening at three or six month intervals. **Your foot screening and assessment today has shown that you have a moderate risk of developing foot ulcers.**

**Moderate risk feet:**

There are a number of reasons for being allocated to a moderate risk category:

- there is some loss of sensation in your feet
- there is reduced blood supply to your feet.

Due to the heightened risk of developing foot problems, you will need to take extra care of them.

There are other events related to diabetes that you need to be aware of. Some people with lack of feeling (neuropathy) can develop foot complications where the joints and bones become disorganised or the foot arches collapse. The first sign of this is a hot and swollen foot. This condition needs immediate medical care.

People with diabetes are also more vulnerable to foot infections, ulceration and slow healing. These infections will often need antibiotics therefore it is very important to seek medical care early.

**Regular care:**

- Callouses and corns should only be treated by a podiatrist.
- Infections develop more easily with diabetes, and if combined with reduced blood flow these can escalate to a more serious problem quickly.
- Check your feet every day for any signs of change such as redness or swelling.
- If the skin on your feet is dry, apply a moisturiser such as sorbolene, or a urea based cream if the skin is extra hard and calloused.

**Things to do:**

- Wear protective footwear inside and outside at all times.
- Check your shoes and feet daily for areas that have become rubbed, the skin will be red when you remove your shoes.
- Take care when washing feet with soap and water. Check the temperature of the water with your hand or elbow if your feet have lost sensation. Take care to wash in-between the toes and don’t soak your feet, as this could lead to infections.
- Check your feet daily for changes such as cuts, blisters, bruises, or colour changes, swelling or open sores. Report them to your healthcare professional (podiatrist, nurse or doctor) without delay.
- Cut and file toenails straight across but avoid leaving sharp edges or corners.
**Things to avoid:**

- Avoid shoes that can damage your feet. This includes tight shoes that can rub your skin and unprotective footwear such as thongs/flip-flops.
- Never use corn plasters and acid solutions on your skin.
- If you smoke, you are strongly advised to stop. Seek help from your general practitioner or pharmacist. Try the Quit line: [www.quitnow.gov.au](http://www.quitnow.gov.au) or phone 13 78 48

**Personal advice:**

Should you experience any signs of foot infection seek medical help immediately. These signs include:

- redness around a wound or cut
- new pain after an injury
- unusual swelling in your feet or legs.

**Your next podiatry appointment:**

You are advised to have your next complete foot assessment in ____ months. This will be due on ______________.

If you require any further information or assistance, please contact QUT Health Clinics on 07 3138 9777.