

Your diabetic foot ulcer questions

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WHAT DO THESE TERMS MEAN?

Wound

A wound is a very broad term that can be simply described as an injury that's occurred to any living tissue, such as the skin.

Diabetic foot ulcer (DFU)

Ulcers are breaks in the skin that fail to heal correctly. These can vary greatly in size and location, both internally and externally.

Diabetes

Diabetes is a longlife condition that causes a person's blood sugar level to become too high, either through insufficient or ineffective insulin production by the pancreas.

Protocol of care

Your health care professionals (HCPs) will implement a care plan termed a protocol of care e.g. Wound Hygiene, during each dressing change appointment to give your wound the best chance of healing.

Wound care dressing

You may know this as a plaster or a bandage but your HCPs may refer to this as a wound care dressing.

WHAT CAN I DO TO LOWER THE CHANCES OF DEVELOPING A DIABETIC FOOT ULCER (DFU)?

Diabetes control

Having diabetes means you're at a much higher risk of developing foot problems. So, staying in control of your diabetes can help to reduce your risk of developing a DFU.

Lifestyle

Being physically active is a great way to stay healthy and manage your diabetes. This in turn reduces your risk of developing a DFU. But remember, if you do develop a DFU it's important to rest and seek professional help.

Check footwear

Ensure you always check before putting on your slippers/shoes to:

- detect any foreign objects
- detect any rough or worn areas

Never walk bare foot as it can be dangerous, and you may stand on sharp objects or stub your toe, especially if you get up in the dark during the night.

Being on holiday can be a challenging time... watch out for hot sand!

Regular checks

Checking your feet daily – and looking carefully for any changes like cuts, bruises or blisters – means you will spot any further concerns straight away. Speak to your podiatrist before a DFU has a chance to form.

WHAT ARE THE TELL-TALE SIGNS I MIGHT HAVE A DIABETIC FOOT ULCER (DFU)?

Unusual swelling and redness

In the early stages of a foot ulcer, you may notice irritation or swelling of the skin. There can also be a warm sensation close to the affected area.

Discolouration

One of the most common signs of diabetic foot ulcers is dark tissue that can appear around the wound because of a lack of blood flow to the feet.

Blisters that don't heal, corns and calluses

Whilst these are relatively common in people with diabetes, if they never heal

properly they are often linked to the development of diabetic foot ulcers.

Persistent pain when walking

You may experience constant pain in the legs when walking or foot pain when elevating your legs.

Your diabetes could mean that you feel less pain in your feet so – while pain may be an indicator for some – do not ignore the other tell-tale signs because you don't feel pain.

WHEN SHOULD I GET HELP IMMEDIATELY?

Numbness/change in sensation

If any part of your foot starts to feel numb or you feel a change in sensation, you should seek advice urgently.

Discharge in your sock or your shoes

If you see any signs of discharge from your feet then you should seek advice urgently.

Smell

If your foot has developed a strong odour, along with other tell-tale signs of a wound, you should seek advice urgently.

Body fever and chills

Like most infections, a developing foot ulcer may cause fever and chills. At the first indication of fever you should seek advice to avoid developing more severe complications.

Persistent pain when walking

If you experience constant pain in the legs whilst walking or foot pain even when elevating your feet you should seek advice urgently.

Language

Prevention

Signs

HCPs

Watch-outs

WHO SHOULD I TALK TO IF I'M CONCERNED?

Nurse / Doctor

Whilst generalist HCPs, such as a nurse or a doctor are often the first port of call, we recommend speaking to a foot specialist, otherwise known as a podiatrist or chiropodist.

Podiatrist

A podiatrist is a medical professional devoted to the treatment of disorders of the foot, ankle, and related structures of the leg. They are the best source of information on your DFU.