



TAKE CARE OF YOUR FEET

Do you have poor blood flow or nerve damage in your legs? If you do, a small foot wound can quickly lead to serious and painful problems—like infection or even leg amputation.

HOW YOU CAN HELP TO AVOID A FOOT PROBLEM BEFORE IT HAPPENS

If you are one of the millions of people at risk for lower leg problems, you can reduce your chances of developing a chronic wound or other foot injury by taking the following steps:

- 1. Stay physically active, eat healthy meals, drink plenty of fluids, and don't smoke**
- 2. Treat your underlying disease or condition**
 - For example, be sure to take any medications that you've been prescribed to reduce blood glucose, blood pressure, cholesterol, clotting, or leg pain
- 3. Take extra good care of your feet**
 - Check your feet every day—look for cuts, sores, red spots, blisters, swelling, infected toenails
 - Keep your feet clean and soft/smooth
 - Trim your toenails carefully after washing (when they are softer)
 - Always wear good-fitting and protective shoes and socks
 - Get blood flowing to your feet... by moving your whole body
- 4. Get your feet checked by a doctor or foot specialist at least once each year**
 - Have your doctor inspect for cuts, sores, blisters, bruises, ingrown nails
 - Have your foot pulses and your sense of feeling checked
 - Ask questions about foot care! (what lotion? what clippers? what shoes and socks?)
- 5. Tell your doctor about any foot problem as soon as you see it**

This fact sheet gives tips on avoiding foot problems. It also explains how, if you already have a foot wound, your specialists can help you heal faster, stay safe, and—if your problem is serious—get the advanced interventions needed to avoid amputation.

WHY YOU ARE AT RISK FOR FOOT PROBLEMS

The root cause of poor blood flow or nerve damage (also called “neuropathy”) in the feet is often diabetes or peripheral arterial disease (PAD). Other possible causes of problems are pressure sores, leg swelling, vessel inflammation, accidents, or treatment side effects (from radiation, surgery, or medications).

WHY FOOT PROBLEMS PUT YOU AT RISK

Whatever the underlying cause, here’s the main danger: with loss of feeling in the legs you might not notice a small cut or blister on your foot until it is larger, deeper, and infected. Unfortunately, with loss of blood circulation in the foot, these sores or ulcers often take a long time to heal or not heal at all. Other foot issues that can erupt into emergencies are: dry/cracked skin, corns, calluses, athlete’s foot, bunions, and hammertoes.



WHAT TO DO IF YOU NOTICE A FOOT PROBLEM

If you notice any foot wound or problem, tell your doctor right away.

Seeing your doctor is especially important if you have a cut, blister, or bruise that has not healed after a day or two. Even small sores or blisters that don’t hurt should be checked out. Remember, any foot problem can become a major health hazard—and even lead to infection or amputation—if not treated promptly and properly. The longer you wait, the greater the risks. Fortunately, many therapies can help speed wound healing and avoid complications. In some cases, your primary care physician or specialist may advise you to go to a particular clinic or “wound healing center” for several visits over a period of weeks.

IF YOUR FOOT PROBLEM IS SERIOUS...

Some leg or foot problems are hard to treat. This is especially true in patients with infected wounds, very poor leg circulation, or personal risk factors (such as smoking, kidney or heart disease, immune problems, or older age with mobility and cognitive issues).

But today, even the most serious foot problems usually don’t require the most dreaded treatment—amputation.

The Temple Limb Salvage Center can help prevent leg amputation by performing complex interventions that revive blood flow to the feet, which gets to the root of the problem and jump-starts the healing process. These highly trained specialists can also provide reconstructive surgeries, bioengineered skin grafts, treatments for underlying diseases, and new types of medicines to encourage growth of blood vessels and skin.

The key to avoiding amputation is fast referral to a limb salvage center that includes vascular surgeons, podiatrists, diabetologists, cardiologists, plastic surgeons, and other specialists.

To schedule an appointment at the Temple Limb Salvage Center or for more information call 215-707-LIMB (5462).

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