

Prescription shoes

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If you have been supplied with shoes, they will have been made to a prescription. You should follow the instructions your orthotist (the person who made your shoes), a doctor or diabetic nurse gives you. At first you should wear the shoes for short periods around your home checking for any problems such as redness caused by rubbing or pressure. If this occurs, you should contact your doctor or diabetic nurse immediately.

When you and the person who prescribed your shoes are happy with the comfort and fit of the first pair, you will be supplied with a second pair.

These should be the only shoes you wear.

Shoes will normally be prescribed with insoles. These are an important part of your footwear and you should only remove them if your doctor or diabetic nurse advises you to. It is important that you check the inside of your shoes every day to make sure no small objects have fallen in, and that no damage has occurred to the insole or lining.

If you notice any wear to the shoes, you should contact your orthopedic engineer or doctor.

Whoever provided your shoes will carry out all repairs or alterations to make sure that they still match your prescription.



Socks, stockings and tights

You should always change your socks, stockings or tights every day. They should not have bulky seams and they should not have elasticated tops. Some pharmacies and surgical supply shops sell suitable products – ask your doctor or diabetic nurse for details. All your socks, stockings and tights should be the right size for your feet.

Remember: if you are not sure about any shoes, socks, stockings or tights you are wearing, or new shoes you have bought, your diabetic nurse or orthopedic engineer will be happy to advise you.

Individual advice

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Local contact numbers

Podiatry department:

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GP clinic:

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Produced by the Scottish Diabetes Group – Foot Action Group

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Advice about your footwear

Diabetes information and advice leaflet



Diabetes is a lifelong condition which can cause foot problems. Some of these problems can occur because the nerves and blood vessels supplying your feet are damaged.

This can affect:

- the feeling in your feet (peripheral neuropathy); and
- the circulation in your feet (ischaemia)

These changes can be very gradual and you may not notice them. This is why it is important that every year you have your feet screened by a general practitioner or diabetic nurse. You can then agree on a treatment plan to suit your needs.

This leaflet gives you advice about wearing the most appropriate shoes, taking into account the shape of your feet and your diabetes.

Unsuitable shoes or shoes that don't fit

properly are the most common cause of foot problems in people with diabetes.

Footwear advice

Check your feet and shoes

Check your feet every day

Check your feet every time you remove your shoes. Also remember to remove your socks, stockings or tights and check for any redness or blisters.

Check your shoes

Check the bottom of your shoes before putting them on to make sure that nothing sharp such as a pin, nail or glass has pierced the outer sole. Also, run your hand inside each shoe to check that no small objects such as small stones have fallen in.

The shape of your feet
Your feet can change shape over time. So, when you buy new shoes, always check their fit carefully.

Buying new shoes

Get your feet measured

If possible have your feet measured and your new shoes fitted properly.

Well-fitting shoes

Makes sure your shoes are long enough, deep enough, and wide enough for your feet. If your shoes are too tight they will press on your toes.

Always try on both shoes

When buying new shoes, always try on both shoes. Most people's feet are slightly different in sizes.

Buy your own shoes

If possible you should go to the shoe shop yourself and not ask somebody else to buy your shoes for you.

Wear new shoes around the house

Wear new shoes around the house for a short periode (20 minutes) and then check your feet. Look for problems such as redness caused by rubbing or pressure. If this happens, you can usually return the shoes to the shop, but only if you have not worn them outside.

Advice on new shoes

If you are not sure if your new shoes are suitable, ask your doctor or diabetic nurse for advice before you wear them.

Recommended footwear

Types of shoes

All well-fitting shoe, boot or trainer with laces or a strap fastening will give your feet the best support. These fastenings will help to keep your foot firmly in place inside your footwear which will help prevent rubbing.

Avoid slip-on shoes and slippers as they give less support.

Low heels

Your heel should not be more than 3 centimetres (1 1/4 inches).

Natural materials

Where possible the uppers (top) of your shoes should be made from a natural material such as soft leather. Leather will fit to your foot without causing any rubbing and will help to prevent your feet from sweating.

Wear and tear

Signs of wear and tear

Check your shoes for signs of wear, such as rough edges in seams or linings, and worn soles or heels. Always check your shoes are in good condition and replace them whenever there are signs of wear and tear that can't be repaired.

