

Crystal Mark 21913
Clarity approved by Plain English Campaign

- When you get home, you must report your concern to your Multi-disciplinary Foot Care Team, local Podiatry Department or doctor (GP) within 24 hours.

Diabetes information and advice to help protect your life and limbs

Why should I be worried about my feet while on holiday?

You have been given this advice leaflet because you are going on or thinking of going on holiday. Due to diabetes, your feet are at risk of developing problems, as diabetes can change:

- the feeling in your feet (peripheral sensory neuropathy); and
- the circulation in your feet (chronic limb-threatening ischaemia).

This risk can sometimes increase while you are on holiday.

When you are on holiday your routine and environment change and you may be more active than usual, which can put your feet at increased risk of developing problems which can become serious.

This leaflet contains advice to help you care for your feet yourself while enjoying your holiday.

Before booking your holiday, check your health insurance cover, especially if you are planning to travel abroad.

What can I do to reduce my risk of developing foot problems?

On the journey

Long journeys can make your feet swell. Try to walk about every half hour if possible, even a short distance will help. This will keep swelling down. Remember your feet may swell in the heat, so make sure your shoes are not too tight.

Check your feet every day

You should check your feet at least once a day for any blisters, breaks in the skin, pain or any signs of infection such as swelling, heat or change in colour, just as you would at home.

If you cannot do this yourself, ask your partner, carer or other family member to help you.

Skin care for your feet

You should wash your feet regularly in warm water and with a mild soap. You should always test the temperature of the water with your elbow, or ask someone else to test the temperature for you.

Rinse them thoroughly and dry them carefully, especially between the toes. Do not soak your feet as this can damage your skin.

If your skin is dry, apply a moisturising cream, avoiding the areas between your toes. You may need to apply extra moisturising cream if your skin gets very dry in hot or cold weather.

You should also use sunscreen on the top and bottom of your feet to reduce the risk of sunburn.

If you are travelling to an area where mosquitoes are present, use fly or mosquito repellent on your feet to reduce the risk of bites.

Toenail care

Carry on cutting your toenails as your podiatrist has advised you to, or make sure that you have them trimmed before you go away to prevent them from getting long.

Avoid walking barefoot

Always wear footwear, even on the beach. The sand can become very warm and you may burn your feet without realising it. If you go into the sea, wear some sort of footwear such as plastic shoes to protect your feet from injury. Avoid wearing 'flip-flop' type footwear as this may cause blisters between your toes.

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. Any objects that are inside your shoes or have pierced the outer sole can put your feet at risk of injury.

Prescription shoes

If you have been supplied with prescribed shoes, do not wear any other shoes during your holiday (except when you are in the sea).

Minor cuts and blisters

Take a small first-aid kit containing sterile gauze dressings and adhesive tape. If you get a small blister, cut or graze, use diluted antiseptic on a gauze swab to clean the wound and tape on a dry sterile gauze dressing, or clean the area with clean water and use a sterile plaster or gauze dressing. Do not burst blisters. Avoid using cotton wool as the fibres may irritate the wound.

Medications and prescriptions

Make sure that you pack any antibiotic prescriptions, dressings, insoles and footwear that have been prescribed and issued to you.

If you take sulphonylureas (for example, gliclazide, glipizide, glibenclamide and glimepiride), you should take extra precautions to avoid too much sunlight as these drugs can cause issues with photosensitivity, making your skin more sensitive to sunlight.

Stopping smoking

If you smoke, you are strongly advised to stop. Smoking affects your circulation and can increase the risk of amputation.

Avoid high or low temperatures

Protect your feet from sunburn with a high-factor sun-protection cream (factor 30 or above) or keep them covered. Do not use dark-coloured materials to protect your feet as they absorb heat and you could burn your feet.

If you have any concerns or discover any problems with your feet, contact the podiatry clinic or GP for advice immediately.