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## Winter Tips for Diabetic Foot Care

Winter can be dangerous for your feet if you're living with diabetes. Colder temperatures mixed with poor blood circulation and possible nerve damage in your extremities make your feet vulnerable to serious complications or infection. To keep your feet healthy and safe this winter, take these precautions.

### Watch Out for Snow

Moisture that collects on your socks and in between your toes can form bacteria and lead to infection. If you walk in heavy snow or slush, be sure to change out of your wet socks as soon as possible and towel dry your feet paying close attention to in between your toes.

### Moisturize

Use a daily moisturizer to avoid dry feet and to keep your skin from itching or cracking.

### Avoid Direct Heat

Keep your feet away from direct heat. Normal winter activities like warming your feet by a fire or cranking up the foot heater in your car can pose problems. The numbness caused by nerve damage can make it impossible to feel the heat on your feet and could lead to second- or third-degree burns. It's best to keep your feet away from direct heat and to avoid warming aids such as electric blankets, heated shoe inserts or heating pads and to keep your feet out of hot water. To make sure, test your bath water with your hand or a thermometer first to make sure it's safe for your feet.

### Proper Shoes

Wearing well-fitting shoes with supportive soles and a roomy toe box to reduce cramping. Keep in mind how different sock textures will affect the wear and walking conditions during the winter months.



### Regular Exams

Be sure to contact our office to regularly schedule foot exams as they can help spot any diabetes-related foot issues early and avoid further complications.

**For more diabetic foot care tips, check out our patient education video [Foot Care for Those Living with Diabetes at FootHealthFacts.org/Videos](#).**

## Say Goodbye to Ingrown Toenails



Ingrown toenails are a common problem for kids and teenagers. While ingrown toenails are rarely life threatening, at-home fixes or “bathroom surgery” can often lead to potentially serious complications making it more painful, leading to infection of the skin or underlying bone and possible toe deformity.

Ingrown toenails occur when the corners or sides of the nail curve

and grow into the soft tissue of the toe. Most commonly children with ingrown toenails will notice swelling and redness in the toes, especially the big toe, and may complain of pain when wearing shoes. If your child has an ingrown toenail, the best treatment is to soak the foot in warm soapy water and make sure their shoes are the right size and fit. If these steps don't do the trick, it's important to schedule an appointment with our office for examination and treatment. Never try to cut away the ingrown part of the nail as it could make things worse. If ingrown toenails are a frequent issue for your child, a surgical procedure may be needed to remove a portion of the nail.

### Here are ways to help your child avoid ingrown toenails:

- Keep his or her feet clean
- Cut toenails straight across—do not round off the corners
- Never allow toenails to grow longer than the tip of the toe
- Avoid having your child wear hand-me-down shoes
- Make sure the shoe's toe box is wide enough to avoid crowding the toes

## Swapping Foot Fractures for Vitamin D

Winter always means shorter, colder days with limited sunlight, which makes it harder to maintain healthy vitamin D levels in your body. As we embark on our first full winter during a pandemic, getting outside is even harder, which makes it even more important to get enough vitamin D. Not enough vitamin D can lead to osteoporosis, bone and muscle pain and increase the risk of stress fractures in your feet.

Calcium usually gets all the credit for building bone density, but it's vitamin D that manages your calcium intake allowing the body to absorb both calcium and phosphate. If your vitamin D levels dip, the weightbearing bones in your feet and ankles are affected as they're not strong enough to withstand the pressure of supporting your body. Typically, the majority of patients who are treated for foot fractures and also have low vitamin D levels are over the age of 50, have limited sun exposure or a darker skin complexion or have a medical condition causing fat malabsorption.

Luckily, there are ways to increase your vitamin D levels without increasing your sun exposure. You can eat fortified foods rich in vitamin D or take a daily supplement. The US Food and Drug Administration daily value for vitamin D is 400 IU, but those with a deficiency may need more.



If you're experiencing frequent foot fractures or unexplainable foot pain, schedule an appointment with our office. We can do a simple lab test to check your vitamin D levels and discuss proper treatment options.

