



DIABETES AND FOOT CARE: PROPER FOOTWEAR

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

Why is proper footwear important?

Over time, people with type 1 and type 2 diabetes may experience changes in blood circulation and nerve function in their feet. These changes may increase the risk of infection. Proper fitting footwear protects feet from injuries that could lead to infections and amputations.

How do I select proper fitting footwear?

When buying shoes:

1. Shop for shoes towards the end of the day. Feet often swell over the course of the day.
2. Have both feet measured each time you buy shoes.
3. Make sure the shoe is deep enough to accommodate the large toe joint, thickened toenails, hammer toes, etc., without rubbing. There should be 1/2 inch space beyond your longest toe when standing with the shoe on.
4. Select a shoe that provides adequate foot support and protection. Avoid buying open-toed shoes or sandals.
5. Shoe sizes may vary with style and manufacturer. Buy the shoe that fits, regardless of the size indicated on the box.

Will I need custom-made shoes?

Most people with diabetes do not need custom-made shoes. Off-the-shelf shoes, with or without inserts or orthotics, can be used. A small number of individuals need custom-made shoes which a specialist can help fit.



GREENWICH HOSPITAL

YALE NEW HAVEN HEALTH

Are there specialists who can help fit shoes properly?

There are specialists that can measure and fit shoes and fill prescriptions from your doctor for special therapeutic shoes or inserts. If you would like to see a specialist, contact your physician for a referral.

Does insurance pay for special footwear?

There is partial reimbursement available to individuals with diabetes who have Medicare Part B. To qualify, your physician must provide a note certifying that therapeutic shoes are needed. Medicare will reimburse 80% of the “allowable amount”, that is, the price determined by Medicare. This reimbursement covers the following:

- one pair of depth shoes and three pairs of inserts per year*,
or
- one pair of custom molded shoes (including inserts) and two additional pairs of inserts per year
- separate inserts under certain situations
- shoe modifications as a substitute for an insert
- custom molded shoes to accommodate a foot deformity

*Calendar year is January 1 to December 31.

Individuals with HMO Medicare or other insurances must check with the insurance carrier regarding coverage.

Web Resources

- ❑ Pedorthic Footwear Association: <http://www.pedorthics.org/patientinfo.html>
- ❑ American Diabetes Association: <http://www.diabetes.org/>

For more Patient Education Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at www.greenwichhospital.org and click on Patient Education.