Why do I need Diabetic Footwear?

A guide to healthier, happier feet for people with diabetes.

Healthier, happier feet start here.

To find a provider near you, go to www.drcomfort.com and click on Find a Footwear Professional. Or call Dr. Comfort at 800.556.5572.

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The Finest Quality Diabetic Footwear Period!
Diabetic Shoes and Inserts Help Prevent Diabetic Amputation

Did you know the rate of amputations for people with diabetes is 10 times higher than for people without diabetes?¹

The good news is there are steps you can take to help ensure you continue to walk through life with healthy, happy feet. Avoiding the foot health complications often associated with diabetes starts with an understanding of how diabetes affects your feet. If you choose to follow your understanding with a plan of care to take better care of your feet, you can significantly reduce your risks of foot calluses, deformities, ulcerations and amputation. And your feet will continue to take you wherever you want to go.

Comprehensive foot care programs can reduce diabetic foot amputations by as much as 85%.²

This booklet will help you understand how diabetes affects your feet and learn how you can take care of your feet for a lifetime.

¹ National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE), study by Caroline Nielsen, PhD, "Issues Affecting the Future Demand..." (2002) ² Centers for Disease Control (CDC) "National Diabetes Facts Sheet, 2017"
Diabetes Can Cause Nerve Damage—Putting Your Toes and Feet at Risk

Many people with diabetes have circulatory issues, which can affect their nerve endings and lead to more serious problems.

Elevated blood sugar levels can cause damage to nerve endings. This leaves many diabetic people with nerve damage in their feet and toes. The common result is a loss of protective sensation.

60-70% of diabetics have mild to severe forms of nervous system damage resulting in impaired sensation in the feet.¹

When you combine a loss of protective sensation with improper or ill-fitting footwear, sores may develop because of rubbing, slipping, or shearing. Simply put, if your nerve endings can’t feel what’s happening to your feet, they can’t send the proper messages to your brain when your feet need special attention or protection.

Prescription diabetic footwear can help provide the extra protection your feet need!

NOTE: Even if you think you have proper feeling in your feet, if you’re diabetic, you should know there’s a good chance you probably don’t.

¹ Centers for Disease Control (CDC) “National Diabetes Fact Sheet, 2011”
What is neuropathy?

Nerve damage from diabetes is called diabetic neuropathy (new-ROP-uh-thee). About half of all people with diabetes have some form of nerve damage. It’s more common in those who have had the disease for a number of years and can lead to many kinds of problems.

Over time excess blood glucose can injure the walls of tiny blood vessels that nourish your nerves, especially in the legs. Nerves send messages to and from your brain about pain, temperature and touch. They tell your muscles when and how to move. They also control body systems that digest food and pass urine.

If you keep your blood glucose levels on target, you may help prevent or delay nerve damage. If you already have nerve damage, this will help prevent or delay further damage. There are also other treatments that can help.¹

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) the rate of amputations for diabetics has fallen by more than half since the mid-1990’s.²

Since 1993, Medicare Part B has provided partial reimbursement for prescription extra-depth shoes and inserts for qualifying beneficiaries with diabetes. Medical experts agree that many diabetic amputations can be prevented by using diabetic footwear as an integral part of a comprehensive foot care program.

How Do Diabetic Shoes and Inserts Help Protect Your Feet?

Diabetic shoes are specially constructed to protect your feet. They're also “extra-depth” to accommodate special inserts, which are either heat-molded to your feet or custom made. Special features and materials combine to provide your feet with the extra protection they need. In order to meet Medicare requirements, shoes and inserts must meet certain criteria and must be submitted to Medicare for approval. These special shoes and inserts must be prescribed by your doctor and professionally fit by a qualified foot care professional in order to qualify for Medicare reimbursement.

Today’s Diabetic Shoes Fit Your Lifestyle!

When people hear the term “therapeutic shoes”, they often think of ugly, bulky, old black shoes. Today’s diabetic shoes come in many beautiful colors and styles—just like regular shoes. Providers today understand that if you don’t love your shoes, you won’t enjoy the health benefits because you simply won’t wear them.
1. Take Care of Your Diabetes

Make healthy lifestyle choices to keep your blood glucose (sugar), blood pressure and cholesterol close to normal. Doing so may help prevent or delay diabetes-related foot problems, as well as eye and kidney disease.

Work with your health care team to make a diabetes plan that fits your lifestyle:

• Know how and when to test your blood glucose and have your blood pressure and cholesterol checked regularly.
• Take your medications as prescribed.
• Eat regular meals that contain a variety of healthy, lowfat, high-fiber foods including fruits and vegetables each day.
• Get physical activity every day.
• Stop smoking.
• Keep your regular doctor’s visits and have your feet, eyes, and kidneys checked at least once a year. You should also visit your podiatrist, dentist and optomitrist at least once a year.

2. Check Your Feet Every Day

You may have serious foot problems, but feel no pain. Check your feet for cuts, sores, swelling, and infected toenails. Find a time to check your feet each day. Make checking your feet a part of your every day routine.

If you have trouble bending over to see your feet, use a mirror to help. You can also ask a family member or caregiver to help you.

Make sure to call your doctor right away if a cut, sore, blister, or bruise on your foot does not begin to heal after one day.
3. Wash Your Feet Every Day

Wash your feet in warm water—use your elbow or a thermometer to be sure the water isn’t too hot. Do not soak your feet because your skin will get dry. When you’re done, dry well and be sure to dry between your toes. Use talcum powder or cornstarch to keep the skin between your toes dry.

4. Keep Your Skin Soft and Smooth

Rub a thin coat of skin lotion or cream on the tops and bottoms of your feet. Do not moisturize between your toes because this might trap moisture and lead to further skin problems.

5. Smooth Corns and Calluses Gently

If you have corns or calluses, check with your family doctor or podiatrist about the best way to care for them. If they tell you to, use a pumice stone to smooth corns and calluses after bathing. A pumice stone is a type of rock used to smooth the skin. Rub gently in only one direction to avoid tearing the skin.

6. Trim Your Toe Nails Each Week

Trim your toenails with clippers after you wash and dry your feet. Trim toenails straight across and smooth them with an emery board or nail file. Don’t cut the corners of the toenails. If you can’t see well, if your toenails are thick or yellowed, or if your nails curve and grow into the skin, have your podiatrist trim them.
7. Wear Shoes and Socks at All Times

- Do not walk barefoot–not even indoors–because it's easy to step on something and hurt your feet. A good pair of slippers around the house provides extra protection.
- Always wear socks, stockings, or nylons with your shoes to help avoid blisters and sores.
- Choose clean, lightly padded socks that fit well. Socks that have no seams are best.
- Check the insides of your shoes for objects and be sure the lining is smooth before you put them on your feet.
- Wear shoes that fit well and protect your feet.

8. Protect Your Feet from Hot and Cold

Wear shoes at the beach or on hot pavement and put sunscreen on the top of your feet to prevent sunburn. Keep your feet away from radiators and open fires and do not put hot water bottles or heating pads on your feet. Wear socks at night if your feet are cold. Be sure to wear warm shoes or boots in cold weather and check your feet often to avoid frostbite.

9. Keep the Blood Flowing to Your Feet

- Put your feet up when you're sitting.
- Wiggle your toes for 5 minutes 2 or 3 times a day.
- Move your ankles up & down and in & out to improve blood flow.
- Don't cross your legs for long periods of time.
- Ask your doctor or health care provider if compression wear might help improve your circulation.
- Don't smoke. Smoking reduces blood flow to your feet.
- Work with your health care team to control your diabetes.
10. Be More Active

Ask your doctor to help you plan a daily activity program that’s right for you. Walking, dancing, swimming and bicycling are good forms of exercise that are easy on the feet. Avoid activities that are hard on the feet, such as running and jumping. Always include a warm-up and cool-down period and wear athletic shoes that fit well and that provide good support.

11. Be Sure to Ask Your Doctor to:

- Check the sense of feeling and pulses in your feet annually.
- Tell you if you’re likely to have serious foot problems. If so, your feet should be checked at every visit to your doctor.
- Show you how to care for your feet.
- Refer you to a good podiatrist, dentist and optometrist.
- Decide if special shoes would help your feet stay healthy.

12. Get Started Now

- Begin taking good care of your feet today.
- Set a time every day to check your feet.
- Note the date of your next visit to the doctor.
- Set a date for buying the things you need to take care of your feet: nail clippers, pumice stone, emery board, skin lotion, talcum powder, plastic mirror, socks, athletic shoes, and slippers to wear around the house.
- Most importantly, stick with your foot care program.

Tips for Proper Footwear

Proper footwear is very important for preventing serious foot problems. Athletic or walking shoes are good for daily wear. They support your feet and allow them to “breathe”.

- When buying shoes, make sure they’re comfortable from the start and have enough room for your toes.
- Don’t buy shoes with pointed toes or high heels. They put too much pressure on your toes.
- Most importantly, if your doctor prescribes special diabetic shoes and inserts, be sure to get comfortable styles you’ll enjoy wearing. If you don’t love your shoes, you won’t enjoy the health benefits your doctor intended.

In addition to shoes, you may want to consider other footwear products to help protect your feet. Good diabetic socks are specially designed to be seamless and wick moisture away from your feet. This helps protect your feet against sores and infections. Diabetic slippers are designed to give your feet the extra protection you need at home. Many are also extra-depth to accommodate your prescription diabetic inserts.
Ask Your Doctor About Medicare or Other Insurance Coverage for Diabetic Footwear

You many need special prescription shoes and inserts to prevent serious foot problems. If you have Medicare Part B insurance, you may qualify each year for reimbursement for:

- 1 pair of extra-depth diabetic shoes, and
- 3 pairs of heat-moldable or custom fabricated inserts.

Other insurances may also cover prescription diabetic footwear. Ask your doctor or foot care professional if you qualify.

For More Information, Please Contact:

American Association of Diabetes Educators
www.diabeteseducator.org
800.TEAM.UP4

American Diabetes Association
www.diabetes.org
800.DIABETES

American Podiatric Medical Association
www.apma.org
301.581.9200

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—Diabetes
www.cdc.gov/diabetes
800.232.4636

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International
www.jdrf.org
800.553.CURE

National Diabetes Education Program
www.ndep.nih.gov
301.496.3583 or 888.693.NDEP

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease
National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse (NDIC)
www.niddk.nih.gov

Dr. Comfort
For your free shoe catalog, a brochure containing the forms you need to take to your doctor for Medicare reimbursement, or to find an approved Dr. Comfort footwear provider located near you.
www.drcomfort.com
800.556.5572

About Dr. Comfort

Dr. Comfort is the worldwide leading manufacturer of prescription diabetic footwear—known for our superior comfort, quality, and style. Our mission is to help raise consumer and healthcare provider awareness of the important benefits of diabetic footwear so that we may help reduce the rates of diabetic amputations.