



Foot Health Fact Sheet

FOOT ULCERS – TREATMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Did you know...

If foot ulcers are not adequately managed and treated, it can eventually lead to amputation.

Foot and leg ulcers are caused by a range of factors, and require timely intervention. Here is how you can help prevent – or manage – an ulcer on your feet or legs.

What is a foot or leg ulcer?

Foot and leg ulcers are open sores caused by a break in the skin which fails to heal. It is important to get treatment from a health professional as soon as you can.

What causes foot ulcers?

Ulcers can develop for a range of reasons including blisters, open wounds, pressure or circulation problems.

Ulcers are more likely to occur when either your circulation or nerve supply in your feet and legs is damaged. Ulcers may develop from blisters caused by incorrectly fitting shoes, from injuries and skin tears, and from pressure due to loss of feeling in the feet. Ulcers on the feet and legs increase the risk of having an amputation particularly in persons with diabetes.

How do you manage ulcers?

Prevention is better than cure. Check your skin daily and treat all open wounds immediately. Wash your feet daily, apply moisturiser to the skin and wear protective footwear such as socks and shoes. If an ulcer develops consult a health professional as soon as possible. Podiatrists are able to manage your wound care, advise on correctly fitting footwear and supply and fit padding or special shoes to manage pressure areas. In some cases you may need to have a walking boot or plaster cast on your foot to encourage the ulcer to heal.

What is the best treatment?

Ulcers should be treated by a podiatrist (or wound specialist) who can remove the dead tissue in the wound and provide appropriate dressings to encourage the tissue to heal.

Prevention of infection is very important when treating ulcers, and sometimes an x-ray may be required to see whether an infection has spread to the bone.

If you have circulation problems you may need to see a vascular surgeon to improve the blood flow to your feet.

Your podiatrist can work with the wound clinic, general practitioner, vascular surgeon and other members of your health team to provide comprehensive care to manage the ulcer.



Find a podiatrist at foothealthaustralia.org.au

This fact sheet is available as a download from foothealthaustralia.org.au



DO YOU NEED TO SEE A PODIATRIST?



DOES THE FOLLOWING APPLY TO YOU OR YOUR FAMILY?

- ☐ Can you only walk for a short period before your feet or legs hurt?
- ☐ Do you experience pain in your lower limbs at night?
- ☐ Do you experience tingling in your feet?
- ☐ Have you noticed your legs or feet are swollen?
- ☐ Do you have cuts or fissures on your feet that take a long time to heal?
- ☐ Are you returning to sport after an injury?
- ☐ Are you uncertain about which running or sports shoe to buy?
- ☐ Do you find that you wear out the outside of your shoes quickly?
- ☐ Have you noticed your toes poke holes in the top of your shoes?
- ☐ Does your forefoot become hot and painful after running or walking?
- ☐ Do your hips hurt?
- ☐ Has pain in your feet or legs stopped you from exercising?
- ☐ Are you worried about your child's feet?
- ☐ Do you have arthritis in your feet?
- ☐ Do you experience reoccurring gouty attacks?
- ☐ Are you worried about the thickness of your nails?
- ☐ Do you have discoloured toe nails?
- ☐ Are you worried about your foot odour?
- ☐ Do your toe nails cause you pain?
- ☐ Have you noticed your toes are clawed?
- ☐ Do you have hard skin on your feet? Is it getting worse?
- ☐ Do you find it hard to cut your own nails?
- ☐ Do you find it hard to fit your feet into shoes because of your bunion?

Ticked one or more boxes? Then you need to see a podiatrist.

GO SEE A PODIATRIST BECAUSE...

Podiatrists are Foot Health Experts and understand the structure and movement of your feet and lower limbs.

They can assess, diagnose and treat foot, ankle, knee, leg or hip pain.

Given your feet alone house a quarter of the bones in your entire body, a podiatrist is best placed to get you moving, active or pain-free.

FIND A PODIATRIST NEAR YOU

Head to **foothealthaustralia.org.au** and search by postcode or suburb to find a podiatrist close to you.



Find a podiatrist at **foothealthaustralia.org.au**

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