

Take care of your feet, skin and teeth today to help prevent problems tomorrow.

Everyone with diabetes should also pay special attention to the health and care of their feet, skin, teeth and gums. These parts of the body are at risk of developing complications that can result from uncontrolled diabetes. In fact, they're often the first to show signs that something might be wrong. So it's particularly important for you to regularly inspect the condition of your feet, practice good dental hygiene, and take care of your skin.

Your doctor and healthcare team would certainly agree that the biggest step you can take is to keep your blood sugar within your prescribed target range. This makes it easier to maintain healthy circulation. And it also improves your ability to heal wounds and fight infections.

In other words, when your blood sugar is in control, every part of your body shares in the benefits.

Caring for your feet.

People with diabetes often have circulation problems, and they may have a loss of sensation that affects the health of their feet. High blood sugar over the years can lead to poor blood flow and nerve damage, which can make it more difficult for cuts or bruises to heal. A few simple steps to keep your feet in good shape include:

- 1. Wash your feet daily.** Use warm water and pat dry. To keep them soft and prevent dry, cracked skin, apply lotion on the tops and bottoms of your feet but not between your toes. Extra moisture between toes may encourage fungus growth.
- 2. Inspect your feet daily.** Check for sores, injuries, red or warm areas, change in color or blisters. If problems develop, contact your doctor.
- 3. Cut your toenails properly.** Trim your toenails straight across and file the edges with an emery board or nail file. Ask your doctor or diabetes educator to explain the correct technique.
- 4. Do not walk barefoot.** Always wear well fitting shoes and clean socks.
- 5. Do not treat calluses, corns or ingrown toenails yourself.** This is a job for your doctor or foot specialist.
- 6. Shop for shoes later in the day.** Your feet are likely to be a little larger than first thing in the morning.
- 7. Shake out your shoes before putting them on** to remove any objects that may have fallen in such as a pebble or a tack.

Essentials of quality skin care.

The American Diabetes Association reports that as many as one-third of people with diabetes will have a skin disorder caused or affected by diabetes at some time in their lives. Fortunately, most skin conditions can be prevented or easily treated if caught early.

- 1. Keep your blood sugar in check.** Poorly controlled blood sugar can interfere with the body's ability to fight infection and heal wounds. High blood sugar can slow healing. It can also contribute to dry skin.

(continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

- 2. Cleanse and moisturize your skin.** Keep your skin moist by avoiding hot baths and showers. Apply lotions and moisturizers anywhere except between your toes. Drink plenty of water to keep skin moist. Avoid scratching dry or itchy skin, which can open it up and allow infection to set in.
- 3. Treat cuts right away.** Wash minor cuts with soap and water. Do not clean skin with harsh solvents such as Mercurochrome antiseptic, alcohol, or iodine. Check with your doctor for the appropriate treatment using over the counter products. Cover minor cuts with sterile gauze. See a doctor right away if you get a major cut, burn, or infection.
- 4. Use special lotions formulated for the unique needs of people with diabetes.** Check with your doctor or diabetes educator for guidance.

Fight gum disease with good dental care.

People with diabetes have a higher risk for gum disease and other dental problems, which can interfere with good blood sugar control. See your dentist twice a year for an exam and cleaning to help maintain proper oral health.

- 1. Brush your teeth twice a day.** Floss your teeth every day. The goal of your daily tooth brushing and flossing is to clean away plaque. When plaque is not removed, it hardens into tartar. Only your dentist or dental hygienist can get tartar off your teeth.

The right way to brush your teeth:

- Angle the brush against the gum line, where teeth and gums meet.
- Brush the outside surface of your teeth. Do the same for the backs of the teeth and chewing surfaces.
- Brush the rough surface of your tongue and gums to remove germs and freshen your breath.
- Allow about three minutes of brushing to clean your teeth well.
- Even dentures need good daily care. Brush daily to remove food and plaque. Brush your gums before putting in your dentures.

- 2. Inspect your gums regularly.** They should not look red, appear swollen or feel tender. Bleeding should not occur when you brush or floss. If these conditions exist, see your dentist.
- 3. Inspect your teeth too.** You'll want to obtain professional help if gums have pulled away from teeth, or if permanent teeth are loose or moving away from each other.
- 4. See your dentist twice a year for an exam and cleaning.**

(continued on page 3)

5. If you wear dentures, follow the care guidelines recommended by your dental professional and manufacturer.

The right way to floss your teeth:

- Break off a piece of floss and wind most of it around one of your fingers. Wind the rest around a finger of the other hand.
- Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and index fingers.
- Use a gentle sawing motion to get the floss between your teeth.
- Scrape the floss up and down on the sides and backsides of your rear teeth.
- As floss gets worn and dirty, move to a clean section and continue.
- When you are done brushing and flossing, rinse your mouth with water.

Medicare Part B patients: Call **1-877-231-5199** and mention reference code **ED06500** to order your diabetes testing supplies.
Web site: www.RxSolutions.com/diabetes

Sources:

National Institute of Diabetes, and Digestive and Kidney Diseases www.NIDDK.nih.gov

National Kidney Disease Education Program www.nkdep.nih.gov

National Kidney Foundation www.kidney.org

Northwest Kidney Centers www.nwkidney.org

The information in this educational tool does not substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis or treatment of your physician. Always seek the help of your physician or qualified health provider for any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

Prescription Solutions is an affiliate of United HealthCare Insurance Company.