

## Foot Care for Carers

This leaflet is intended to give a simple practical guide about nail and foot care. It is designed for anyone caring for their own family or working as a carer or a nurse.

### Nail cutting

Nails are softer and easier to cut after bathing. Wash the feet with soap and water to remove dirt and germs from the skin. It is important that everyone should have their own nail clippers and nail file.

Before caring for feet - think of Paces

(P) Position yourself. Make yourself comfortable - do not strain your back.

(A) Assess the task. Sit on a chair with the person's foot in your lap or kneel on the floor with the foot on a footstool. If the person is bedridden, position their feet at the end of the bed and kneel or sit on a low stool. Avoid stretching or leaning over the bed - pillows can be used to raise the feet.

(C) Clean nail clippers and file before and after use. Using the tips of the clippers, gently clip the nail from one end to the other, shielding the end of the clippers and taking care not to jab or lift the nail. Trim away excess nail, making sure the nails are not too short. File all of the nails smooth, removing rough or sharp edges to make thickened nails more comfortable.

(E) Examine the feet. Check gently between the toes to remove nail clippings.

(S) Seek specialist advice if there is pain, redness or discharge.

An advantage of being positioned behind the foot is that you can see if there are any fleshy tufts under the nail. Tufts are not very common, they are painless but can bleed freely when cut and with repeated damage will soon become more prominent. Cut the nails carefully, leave the tufts alone and they will not hurt or give problems.

Some nails curve in at the sides and may in-grow. To prevent nails in-growing do not cut down the sides, trim away extra length and file the edge smooth. If nails curve over the ends of the toe, they should be cut or filed to the normal length. Take care not to lift the nail as this can be tender.

Anyone who is diabetic or has poor circulation is advised to check their feet each day and file their nails regularly. A long or chipped nail can cut the skin and may cause an infection.

### Moisturising heels

If skin on the feet and heels is dry and sensitive, a non-perfumed moisturising cream is recommended. Particular care should be taken to keep the skin around the heels in good condition and prevent pressure sores or dry cracks/splits occurring in the skin which could become infected. Place a small amount

of cream in the palm of both hands and with small circular movements of your thumbs massage the cream into extra dry or tender areas. Avoid the spaces between the toes.

### General Foot Care Information

Clean socks and stockings should be worn daily and checked for fit. The sock or stocking should be the same size as the foot without stretching. After washing, dry the feet carefully and check between the toes. If there is excessive sweating or if the toes are deformed or clenched tightly together, moisture can become trapped between the toes and they may be prone to picking up fungal infections (athletes foot). The skin can look white and soggy.

A cotton bud can be used to clean or dry between the toes. A folded tissue or stream of cool air from a hairdryer can also help with drying. Avoid splitting the skin by parting the toes carefully.

Surgical spirit is recommended daily for in-between toes until the skin returns to normal. This will help to dry the skin and prevent splits (fissures) and infections. Do not use surgical spirits if it 'stings'. Moisturising cream and talcum powder are not recommended as the moisturising cream can over-soften the skin and talcum powder tends to 'cake', holds moisture and harbour germs.

A foot massage with either moisturising cream or oils will keep the skin in good condition; help the circulation; help to prevent pressure sores and present a barrier against infection. Receiving a smooth gentle massage can be very comforting and relaxing and help in relieving stress. Massage each foot with small circular movements of the thumbs and use the heel of your hand in sweeping strokes along the bottom and top of the foot towards the heel and ankle. Firm and gentle strokes avoids any sensation of tickling.

### **Daily foot exercises**

Foot exercises are easy to do – twice daily is recommended or more often if a person is sitting or lying for long periods.

Draw imaginary circles in the air with both feet, clockwise and anti-clockwise.

Lift the toes towards you and then point away from you.

Spread the toes apart and then clench the toes.

Holding on to a chair, stand on tiptoe and then go back onto heels.

These will help to aid joint mobility, tone foot and leg muscles, improve circulation and help relieve swelling.

Other leaflets are available on foot care and footwear

For further advice, you can contact:

Signpost: 01803 666620  
(Carers Information and Advice).

It is recommended that you follow the advice in this leaflet and only contact the podiatry department should you have any concerns about your relative's or client's feet or footwear.

If your relative or client is aged between 19-60 years a G.P. referral will be needed.

Please contact the Podiatry  
Appointment Office  
01803 217712

If you:  
--require further information  
--require this leaflet in a different format

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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.



**Torbay and South Devon**  
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## **PATIENT INFORMATION**

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Department of Podiatry  
And Foot Health

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Working with you, for you