

Foot Care and Your Health

- Check your feet every day.
- Apply lotion daily.
- Wear well-fitting shoes and socks.
- Keep your feet clean.
- Avoid soaking your feet.
- Avoid going barefoot as it increases risk of trauma and injury.

Green Flags—All Clear

What this means ...



If you have:

- Check your feet daily.
- Apply lotion daily.

- Good work!

Keep up the great work!

Yellow Flags—Caution

What this means ...



If you have:

- Itching, redness, cracking of skin on feet
- Thick, yellow toenails
- Changes in temperature, cold feet
- New pain in feet/legs not relieved by medication
- Red, ingrown toenail(s)
- Thick, hard skin build-up of skin on the feet (callous)
- Sores on feet or legs are not healing
- Pain in feet and problems walking

- You need follow-up with your health care provider to discuss a treatment plan.

Call your health care provider if symptoms do not improve.

Name:

Number:

Instructions:

If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.

Red Flags—Stop and Think

What this means ...



If you have:

- A red, swollen foot (or feet)
- Pain behind the leg (calf) and leg tenderness
- Fever/chills

- You could have blood clot, infection, or other health issue that needs medical attention.

Contact your health care provider's office as soon as possible.

Health Care Provider:

Number:

Contact your health care team as soon as possible.

Foot Care Fast Facts

- The human body is made up of 206 bones, including 52 in your feet (26 in each foot). Also, each foot has 33 joints and 100+ muscles, ligaments, and tendons.
- Feet have 250,000 sweat glands that, on average, put out about one cup of moisture each day.
- The most common foot problems include ankle sprains, calluses, toenail problems, and *plantar fasciitis*, an inflammation of a thick band of tissue that connects the heel bone to the toes.
- Other foot problems include abscess (formation of pus under the skin), bone infection, bunions, corns, cracked heels, hammertoes, skin infection (cellulitis), and ulcers (sores) that do not heal.
- There are additional factors for those who have diabetes, including nerve damage (*neuropathy*) and poor circulation. For untreated diabetes, serious foot conditions can result, including *Charcot foot*, a condition in which bones of the foot are weakened enough to fracture. With continued walking, the foot eventually changes shape. As the disorder progresses, the joints collapse and the foot takes on an abnormal shape, such as a rocker-bottom appearance. NOTE: You may not have pain, so watch for redness and/or swelling that worsens.
- Skin is your first line of defense against infections. Avoid soaking feet, which can damage skin.
- If your feet are aligned, your toes will point straight ahead when you walk. The first point of contact is your heel, then the outside border of your foot, then the ball of your foot, and finally, the big toe.
- Custom-fitted orthotics (arch supports) can help to support, stabilize, and balance the foot, and improve foot alignment and gait patterns. Replace an orthotic every six months (more frequently if you use over-the-counter shoe inserts).
- Heart disease can impact how the heart pumps fluid, and a person might notice swelling in feet and ankles. When this happens, shoes and socks can become tight and restrict circulation. Shoe pressure on the bony parts of the foot can lead to pressure injuries and foot ulcers/sores. If you have arthritis or osteoarthritis, you may have foot pain caused by degeneration of cartilage. This can impact your ability to walk safely and puts you at risk of injury. Arch supports may help with this condition.

What can you do?

- Wash your feet daily and dry well between the toes.
- Apply a good moisturizing cream that softens skin so that antifungal medication can work. Do not apply lotion between the toes as this keeps the area too moist and can cause bacteria to grow.
- Wear socks made of natural fibers, like cotton or wool instead of synthetic materials, to help create a more breathable environment. Cotton or wool blend is better as these fibers protect the feet while allowing moisture or sweat to evaporate.
- Avoid going barefoot, indoors and outdoors. Going without shoes puts you at higher risk for stepping on a sharp object, like a tack or needle. Sometimes these items cause a wound that can become easily infected. This is particularly important for people with diabetes. If they have loss of feeling in their feet, they might not feel if they step on something.
- Wear properly fitted footwear.

Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County—plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County. For information about services or interpretation assistance, call 844-348-5464 or e-mail info@communitylivingconnections.org.



Aging and Disability Services
700 Fifth Avenue, 51st Floor * PO Box 34215
Seattle, WA 98124-4215
Tel. 206-684-0660 * TTY: 206-684-0702
aginginfo@seattle.gov