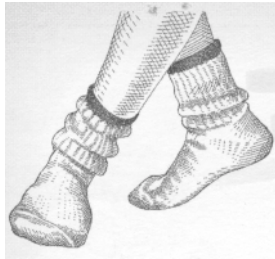


## Diabetic foot care and exercise

By Gail Cutrell, DTR

Regular exercise is one of the best things you can do to take care of yourself when you have diabetes and kidney failure. Mixing different types of exercises, such as walking, swimming, and gardening, is the best way to avoid overuse of your feet while staying in shape.



Taking care of your feet is especially important when you have diabetes. Diabetes can cause changes in the skin of your feet. The skin may become very dry, peel and crack. The nerves that control sweating to your foot may no longer work. Calluses build up faster on the feet of people with diabetes. If not trimmed, the calluses can get very thick, and turn into foot ulcers. Diabetic nerve damage, or neuropathy, can lessen your ability to feel pain, heat, and cold. How can you know if you have a foot injury if you can't feel your feet?

Here is a checklist to do everyday, especially before and after exercising.

- ✓ Inspect your feet closely each morning and evening, and before and after any physical activity
- ✓ Keep your feet clean. Wash them with warm soapy water.
- ✓ Keep your feet dry. Dry them carefully, especially between the toes.
- ✓ Keep your feet soft. Use powder if your skin is very moist. Use lotion if your skin is very dry, but don't lotion between the toes.
- ✓ Avoid extreme temperature changes.
- ✓ Wear proper footwear. Choose clean, loosefitting, cotton or wool socks. Shoes should be snug but not tight.
- ✓ If you care for your own nails, after a shower or bath is the best time to trim them. A trained professional, such as a podiatrist, can also trim your nails regularly.

Please remember, if you notice any changes in your feet be sure to contact your doctor right away.