

Looking after your feet

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01392 402093 or at rduh.pals-eastern@nhs.net (for Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter services) or on 01271 314090 or at rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net (for North Devon services).

This leaflet provides comprehensive information on how to provide basic routine foot care, how to prevent foot problems occurring and who to contact if you have foot concerns.

Nail care

- The safest way to care for your nails is to file them regularly with an emery board, smoothing off any sharp edges.
- If the nails need to be cut, sit in a comfortable position, well balanced and in good light. It is much easier if a carer, partner or relative can cut them for you.
- Use a pair of nail clippers (scissors can be dangerous as they slip easily). Cut each nail straight across so that the nail is level with the end of the toe and no shorter. Finish off by filing the nails smooth.
- Avoid cutting down the sides of the nail as this can often leave hidden spikes of nail. These can become painful and infected and result in ingrowing toenails.

Skin care

- You should wash your feet every day in warm soapy water and dry thoroughly especially between the toes.
- If the skin between the toes is very damp, you can use a cotton bud to dab the area with surgical spirit.
- If you have hard skin on your feet, this can be reduced by gently filing the area with an emery board and then applying moisturising cream.
- If your skin is dry, apply a moisturising cream to the tops and soles of your feet, but not between the toes.

Fungal infections

Fungal infections of the nail can appear in many forms. It can often cause the nails to become thickened and discoloured, flaky or brittle.

Fungal skin infections, such as athlete's foot, may cause the skin become red, flaky and itchy.

Topical treatments are available from the GP or the pharmacist for the skin but these are often ineffective for nail infections.

If you are concerned about any new skin condition affecting your feet, please speak to a pharmacist, podiatrist or your GP.

Verrucae (warts)

Verrucae are skin growths caused by a virus which lives on the skin. They can be transmitted from one person to another.

They are harmless and are best left alone as they will eventually disappear.

The NHS podiatry service does not offer treatment for verrucae. If they become painful, please see a Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registered podiatrist.

Footwear and hosiery

You should change your socks, stockings or tights every day. They should not leave marks on the skin.

Incorrectly fitting shoes can apply too much pressure to feet causing problems.

- Try to shop for shoes in the afternoon when feet are at their largest.
- Take your time buying shoes and make sure you stand in them and walk around the shop, if possible.
- Shoes should have a sufficient gap in front of the longest toe.
- Your toes should not feel cramped in a shoe or cause a bulge in the side or touch the top of the shoe.
- Shoes should have a low, wide heel to form a stable platform.
- Shoes should have a fastening such as lace, Velcro or a buckle to hold the foot secure. If your feet swell during the day, this can then be adjusted.



When should I ask for help?

Please contact your GP, healthcare provider or podiatrist if you have the following concerns with your foot:

- Pain / throbbing
- Redness / inflammation / swelling
- Discharge
- A new wound that does not heal in one week
- Change in colour or shape to the foot

Further information

Eastern locality

Tel: 0345 266 7772

Email: rduh.podiatryappointments-eastern@nhs.net

Northern locality

Tel: 01271 341509

Email: rduh.podiatry@nhs.net

I do not meet the access criteria for NHS podiatry. Who should I contact?

Podiatry is available privately and it is recommended that you check whether the person treating you is registered with Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). This can be done online at www.hcpc-uk.org/check-the-register or by phoning 020 7357 6655.

For more information on foot care and finding a registered podiatrist, visit Royal College of Podiatry website at www.rcpod.org.uk

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern, please contact:

PALS Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter

- call 01392 402093 or email rduh.pals-eastern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital in Wonford, Exeter.

PALS North Devon

- call 01271 314090 or email rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at the North Devon District Hospital in Barnstaple.

Have your say

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

Tell us about your experience of our services. Share your feedback on the Care Opinion website www.careopinion.org.uk.

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Raleigh Park, Barnstaple
Devon EX31 4JB
Tel. 01271 322577
www.royaldevon.nhs.uk

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