

PATIENT INFORMATION

Foot Health Fact Sheet

FOOT ULCERS – TREATMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Did you know...

If foot ulcers are not adequately managed and treated, it can eventually lead to amputation.

Foot and leg ulcers are caused by a range of factors, and require timely intervention. Here is how you can help prevent – or manage – an ulcer on your feet or legs.

What is a foot or leg ulcer?

Foot and leg ulcers are open sores caused by a break in the skin which fails to heal. It is important to get treatment from a health professional as soon as you can.

What causes foot ulcers?

Ulcers can develop for a range of reasons including blisters, open wounds, pressure or circulation problems.

Ulcers are more likely to occur when either your circulation or nerve supply in your feet and legs is damaged. Ulcers may develop from blisters caused by incorrectly fitting shoes, from injuries and skin tears, and from pressure due to loss of feeling in the feet. Ulcers on the feet and legs increase the risk of having an amputation particularly in persons with diabetes.

How do you manage ulcers?

Prevention is better than cure. Check your skin daily and treat all open wounds immediately. Wash your feet daily, apply moisturiser to the skin and wear protective footwear such as socks and shoes. If an ulcer develops consult a health professional as soon as possible. Podiatrists are able to manage your wound care, advise on correctly fitting footwear and supply and fit padding or special shoes to manage pressure areas. In some cases you may need to have a walking boot or plaster cast on your foot to encourage the ulcer to heal.

What is the best treatment?

Ulcers should be treated by a podiatrist (or wound specialist) who can remove the dead tissue in the wound and provide appropriate dressings to encourage the tissue to heal.

Prevention of infection is very important when treating ulcers, and sometimes an x-ray may be required to see whether an infection has spread to the bone.

If you have circulation problems you may need to see a vascular surgeon to improve the blood flow to your feet.

Your podiatrist can work with the wound clinic, general practitioner, vascular surgeon and other members of your health team to provide comprehensive care to manage the ulcer.



Find a podiatrist at podiatry.org.au

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Do you need to see a podiatrist?

Here is a handy checklist. Do you...

- ☐ Have painful feet?
- ☐ Experience leg pain?
- ☐ Have painful knees?
- ☐ Experience sore hips?
- ☐ Find walking or standing uncomfortable?
- ☐ Experience leg or foot pain during sport?
- ☐ Need advice on correct footwear?

Ticked one or more boxes? Then you need to see a podiatrist.

Go see a podiatrist

Because...

- ✓ Podiatrists are Foot Health Experts and understand the structure and movement of your feet and lower limbs.
 - ✓ They can assess, diagnose and treat foot, ankle, knee, leg or hip pain.
- Given your feet alone house a quarter of the bones in your entire body, a podiatrist is best placed to get you moving, active or pain-free.

Find a podiatrist near you

Contact the Australian Podiatry Association at **podiatry.org.au** and search by postcode or suburb to find a podiatrist close to you.



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