DIABETES

KEEP YOUR FEET HEALTHY
What to do to keep your feet healthy

- Wear something on your feet
- Wash your feet every day
- Get someone to help you when you can't care for your feet
- Keep your feet soft (rub on cream or fat)

Care for your feet every day
Every day, people with diabetes need to "Keep their feet healthy"

- Wash and dry your feet
- Look for pus, blood or a swollen foot
- Look for sores, cuts, or deep cracks
- Get someone else to care for your feet when you can’t care for your feet

Healthy skin protects your feet
When something's wrong with your feet

Get someone to check it out quickly. Go straight to the clinic or health worker.

At the clinic the health worker tells you how to "care for your feet" when there is something wrong.

Don't wait till a little problem becomes a big problem.
Don't wait till you can't walk.

Protect your sore by keeping it covered.

Go to the clinic each day for dressings.

Take your medicines until they are finished.

Keep your blood sugar under 8mmol/L.
Foot problems happen when:

- Blood sugars too high for many years
- Not enough healthy food
- Too much grog
- Smoking

Foot problems can be prevented.
**Bad circulation**
Is when the blood vessels are getting blocked up.

This happens slowly over many years when
- blood sugars are too high for many years
- not enough good food or healthy food
- smoking
- too much fatty food
- not active enough

When this happens not much blood can get to the legs and feet.
This causes sores to heal slowly, more infections and sometimes gangrene (when toes turn black).

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**Nerve damage**
Healthy nerves give feelings to the feet and legs.

Pain messages are carried by nerves. These nerves tell us of danger and help to protect us against getting hurt.

The nerves to the feet don’t work properly when there has been
- blood sugars too high for many years
- too much grog

When nerves are not working properly the feeling in the feet is different - it doesn’t feel quite right. There may be no feelings, there may be sharp pain.

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This damage happens slowly over many years
When people with diabetes don't "Keep their feet healthy"

They don’t know when something is a bad sore on their foot.

A long time later when the sore is big, it might smell or the person can’t walk. Then when they go to the clinic the sore is too big for the clinic to treat.

When a person has sores and ulcers a lot, it can end up as gangrene and sometimes with amputation (leg or foot needs to be cut off). When a foot or leg is amputated the person can’t get around easily.

They need to go to hospital. Then the person is away from home and family for a long time.

Prevent these problems, get help early
The indigenous population of Australia has one of the highest prevalence rates of Type 2 Diabetes in the world and suffers from unacceptably high diabetes mortality.

In the Western world, diabetic foot problems are reported as the most common form of complication, and evidence suggests this is also true for Indigenous Australians. An Alice Springs study showed that over a six year period, Aboriginal people accounted for over 90% of people admitted to hospital with diabetic foot complications. Appropriate culturally sensitive education can reduce complications significantly.

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YOU CAN GET HELP FROM YOUR......
- Aboriginal Health Worker
- Health Clinic or Community Care Centre
- High Risk Foot Clinic - Local Hospital
- Doctor
- Diabetes Australia Northern Territory

Participants from the Focus Groups held on 6 August 1999 and 4 September 1999 in Darwin.

For further information regarding this resource contact Healthy Living Northern Territory, PO Box 40113, CASUARINA NT 0811. Ph: 08 89278488 Fax: 08 89278515 Email: info@healthylivingnt.org.au www.healthylivingnt.org.au

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