Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Looking after your foot ulcer

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Looking After Your Foot Ulcer

Patient Information

Community Podiatry Services

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What is a foot ulcer?

A foot ulcer is a wound or sore on your foot that occurs when an area of thickened skin is left untreated. It can also start by a shoe rubbing or a minor injury, such as stepping on something sharp.

Conditions such as Diabetes can damage your blood supply or sensation to your feet, and you are at risk of developing problems because you may not notice when they get injured.

Around 1 in 10 people with diabetes will develop a foot ulcer, which is why it is important to get regular foot checks.

What happens next?

Looking after an ulcer is vital to reduce the risk of infection. If infection is not treated quickly, you may need surgery to remove part of the foot. If you are not seeing a specialist podiatrist already, you will be referred immediately. You may need to be seen in a specialist multidisciplinary clinic with a team of different health professionals, who all can work together to help your ulcer heal as quickly as possible.

Your treatment plan

A treatment plan will be agreed with you. This will involve:

- Removing the dead skin and cleaning the wound. This is usually not painful.

- Specialist dressings applied to facilitate healing.
- Regular checks and redressing appointments
- Possible multidisciplinary clinical appointments with different health professionals to help heal your ulcer as quickly as possible.
- A special dressing will be applied to keep the dressing clean and encourage healing; this will need to be changed regularly, by a podiatrist. There are some important things you can do to help your foot ulcer to heal:
- Keep your dressing dry and clean.
- You can get dressing protectors, so you can shower without getting the dressing wet. These are available to order from chemists, or mobility aid retailers, and are available from numerous sources online.
- You should rest and elevate your foot and avoid standing or walking on your affected foot as much as possible. You may be given a temporary shoe, boot, or other offloading device to help reduce the pressure on your ulcer. These may be removable or non-removable.

If you smoke, you **must** stop as smoking will reduce the blood flow to your foot and slows down healing; if you need help quitting, talk to your podiatrist or nurse.

Control your blood sugars as carefully as you can; a normal blood glucose level will help your ulcer to heal. High sugar levels increase the likelihood of infection which will delay healing.

Talk to your diabetic team if you are having problems managing your blood sugars

Signs of infection

If you have any of the following, please contact your podiatrist/ GP immediately.

These may include:

- Increased pain to the wound area
- Redness
- Swelling
- Increased discharge from the wound
- Fever or raised temperature
- Offensive smell from the wound.
- Break in the skin
- Do you feel unwell?

What to do if you are concerned

- Do not wait for a podiatrist to contact you if your condition gets worse or if you have any concerns. Seek help / advice from the contact number above or from your General Practitioner (GP). If you feel urgent advice is required, you should go to your local Accident and Emergency Department.

In the event of a medical emergency ring 999

SEPSIS

Sometimes a severe infection can spread into your blood stream and be life threatening and is called Sepsis. The symptoms of Sepsis can sometimes be mistaken as flu, a tummy bug, or a chest infection. Signs of Sepsis include:

- Slurred speech
- Extreme shivering or muscle pains
- No urination in 24hrs
- Breathlessness
- A feeling that you may die.
- Your skin becoming mottled or discoloured.
- You may not always experience pain alongside the symptoms above.

If you have any of the above symptoms of Sepsis, call 111 or go to the Emergency Department (A&E) immediately.

Local contact numbers

Podiatry Department: **0300 707 7700**

Useful websites

Health and Care Professions Council - www.hcpc-uk.org

College of Podiatry - www.cop.uk

NHS Choices - www.nhs.uk

Diabetes UK - www.diabetes.org.uk

NICE - www.nice.org.uk



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