

# Diabetic Foot Care



The high prevalence of diabetes in the Pacific is increasing the demand on social and health systems, making the prevention and treatment of diabetes complications a priority.

## Diabetes and amputations

In 2017 the International Diabetes Federation reported that Pacific Island countries accounted for eleven of the top twelve countries in the world for diabetes prevalence.

Foot wounds (ulcers) are amongst the most common complications of diabetes. People with diabetes are more susceptible to developing foot ulcers that are slower to heal. In many Pacific countries, untreated, infected foot ulcers often lead to multiple amputations and sometimes death.

## Diabetic Foot Care

The World Health Organisation estimates that 50% of all hospital admissions and amputations as a result of diabetes can be prevented with appropriate foot care.

Diabetic Foot Care consists of two main areas; prevention and treatment of ulcers.

## Prevention of ulcers

**Client education:** Educating clients is an important aspect of ulcer prevention. General diabetes management including; healthy diet, regular physical activity, maintaining a healthy body weight, avoiding tobacco and alcohol use, monitoring blood sugar levels, as well as education specific to foot health, all help to reduce risk of foot ulcers occurring.

**Appropriate shoes:** Shoes that fit well and provide

protection and support are important to prevent injuries to the feet.

**Self monitoring:** Diabetes can cause nerve damage and a loss of feeling in the feet. This means an injury may occur without the person knowing. Therefore, it is important for a person with diabetes to check their feet every day for problems. As diabetes can also affect eyesight, a family member or carer may need to assist with this.

## Treatment

Whilst the prevention of foot wounds is preferable, it is still possible to prevent amputation through appropriate treatment of a diabetic foot ulcer.

**Client education:** As with prevention, client education is key to successful treatment of foot ulcers and must be a part of each appointment.

**Wound care:** Caring for wounds, including debridement and dressing under clean conditions, is critical in preventing infection and allowing healing. If infection is already present, medical intervention should be sought.



**Offloading:** A key principle of diabetic foot ulcer management is offloading the ulcer by removing the pressure and redistributing it to other

parts of the foot. This can be achieved in a number of ways including; custom-made total contact casts, cast shoes, felt padding and shoe modifications.



## Health Personnel

All health personnel must play a role in preventing amputation. At every opportunity clients can be reminded about taking care of their diabetes and their feet. Feet can be checked for any signs of foot problems that need to be addressed, referring onto relevant personnel immediately.

## Benefit of Diabetic Foot Clinics

A Diabetic Foot Clinic allows all aspects of diabetic foot care to happen at the same time, alongside other medical and surgical services. A team which includes Nurses, Podiatrists and Orthotists with access to specialist medical personnel, work together to prevent and treat foot ulcers with the goal of preventing amputation.

Preventing amputations is beneficial for the client, their family and their community; it also has the potential to reduce health care costs by decreasing hospital admissions and on-going amputee management costs (including Prosthetic devices).



motivation  
australia

For more information contact:

Tom Fitzpatrick  
Project Officer  
tomfitzpatrick@motivation.org.au

**Motivation Australia**  
191 Port Rd, Aldinga  
SA 5173, Australia,  
+61 (0)466 833 708  
info@motivation.org.au  
www.motivation.org.au