People with diabetes have special reasons to care for their feet. Diabetes can result in damage to the circulation and feeling in the feet. However, the development of foot problems is not an inevitable consequence of diabetes. With care, attention and the application of simple footcare measures, most problems can be prevented. Have your feet checked by your doctor, nurse or podiatrist, and follow the advice given.

Aim for the best control of your blood glucose levels which will reduce your chances of complications. If you smoke, you should make every effort to stop to prevent circulation problems. Also, try to exercise daily to stimulate the blood flow through your feet and legs.

When resting, do not cross your legs as this can restrict your circulation.

“Putting you first is at the heart of everything we do”
Wear well fitting shoes with soft uppers. Lace-up shoes are recommended because they hold your heel firmly into the back of your shoe. This prevents your feet from sliding forward and leaves plenty of room for your toes. If you must wear unlaced or court shoes, do so for only short periods. (For further information see our separate Footwear leaflet).

Socks or stockings should be changed daily. Socks should be made of cotton or wool, and be long enough so that your toes are not cramped. Ensure that sock or stocking tops do not have a tight ring of elastic that will restrict your circulation.

Because of the risk of injury, do not walk barefoot, especially outside the house. To prevent damage to your legs and feet, do not sit too close to fires or heaters. Turn off electric blankets and remove hot water bottles before getting into bed. To keep warm, wear loose fitting bed socks.

Wash your feet in warm water (40°C, 104°F), but do not soak them. Test the temperature of the water to check that it is not too hot for you. Rinse well after washing and dry carefully, especially between your toes.

If your skin is dry, apply moisturising cream daily to your feet, but not between your toes. If your skin is moist between your toes, apply surgical spirit or witch hazel.

If you develop any corns, hard skin, ingrowing toenails or other foot problems, see your podiatrist. NEVER use corn plasters or paints as they contain strong acids.

Cut your toenails regularly after bathing when they are softest. Try not to cut them too short. Alternatively, use a file weekly before bathing while your nails are hard and brittle – your podiatrist will show you how. Use a soft nailbrush if you need to clean round the edges of your nails.

Any minor cuts or blisters should be covered with a sterile dressing. NEVER prick blisters. If they burst, treat as a cut with a sterile dressing. If not treated promptly trivial wounds can lead to serious infected conditions. So if minor injuries do not respond, consult your podiatrist, doctor or nurse.

Remember Preventative care of the feet, combined with good diabetic control, is the best protection against foot problems.

Daily Check
It is essential to examine your feet every day. Also check inside your shoes for anything that will irritate the skin, such as stones, sharp objects or creased insoles.
Consult your podiatrist, doctor or nurse immediately if:
1. You notice a colour change in any part of your leg or foot.
2. You notice a discharge coming from a break in the skin, from a corn, or under a toenail.
3. There is a troublesome pain, throbbing, swelling or itching.