

Health Education Leaflet Diabetic Foot Clinic

Ischaemia

(Poor circulation to the feet and legs)

You have been found to have 'ischaemia' in your feet and legs. This means that you have reduced circulation, which may delay or inhibit healing. Fatty deposits can build up and narrow the blood vessels in your legs. Less blood can flow through the vessels. When this happens, cells do not receive the needed oxygen and nutrients for healing.

Poor circulation may cause the skin on feet and legs to become thin and very dry. Hair may disappear. The foot may feel cold and look bluish.

Poor circulation also makes the skin on your legs and feet more likely to develop injuries and infections which may lead to ulceration. Wound healing may be impaired in these areas.

Poor circulation and muscle pain

If you get pain in the calf muscles in your legs, it could be a sign of blocked arteries. This can cause a decrease blood flow to the muscles they then receive too little oxygen and sugar to work efficiently. Waste products can then build up during exercise that is irritating to the muscles. The result is cramping pain (or claudication).

Testing for poor circulation

The pulses in your feet, and possibly behind the knee will be checked. This helps determine the degree of blockage in your legs. It may be necessary to take the blood pressure in your legs and compare it with your arm to assess the degree of damage. You will also be asked about any pain in your legs.

Treating circulatory problems in the feet and legs

Preventive lifestyle changes are necessary to stop the progression of leg problems. The healthy lifestyle choices to prevent poor circulation are the same as those suggested to prevent heart disease. They include regular exercise, a healthy balanced diet, good diabetes control, reducing blood pressure and cholesterol, and quitting smoking.

If your circulation is severely impaired, your doctor may suggest surgery. The goal of any procedure is to re-establish an adequate blood supply to the legs, feet and toes.

How can I look after my feet?

- Inspect your feet every day for redness, cuts or injuries.
- Follow a daily foot care programme (see our leaflet).
- Ensure a doctor, nurse or podiatrist checks your feet at least once a year.
- Report any injuries to your feet (no matter how small) to your doctor, nurse or podiatrist. If they fail to improve within three days or before if they start to deteriorate.

- NEVER walk bare foot, especially on holiday.
- Maintain good control of your diabetes.
- Quit smoking.

If you have any concerns or questions about the advice provided in this leaflet, are experiencing any problems with your foot, please contact the **Diabetic Foot Clinic on (01603) 288522, Monday - Friday 9am-5pm.**

It is often easier to contact us via **email** on ebdcfootclinic@nnuh.nhs.uk. If you are able, please email a photograph of your foot as this will help the team decide whether we need to see you urgently.

Please include your name, date of birth, address and hospital or NHS number in any email you send so we can correctly identify you. Please also include a telephone number we can contact you on if we need to speak to you urgently.

We aim to provide the best care for every patient. So, we would like your feedback on the quality of the care you have received from the Hospital. Please visit: <http://ratenhs.uk/IQu9vx>

