

# Footwear for high-risk feet

## Why is good footwear important?

If you have a high-risk foot you have a much higher chance than the general population to develop serious foot problems and have an amputation.

Certain medical conditions – for example, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and circulation disorders – can place your feet at high risk of damage. People with these conditions often experience reduced feeling in their feet, a reduced ability to produce sweat, and the shape of their feet may change over time.

If you do not properly care for your feet, these changes can happen quickly and could lead to wounds.

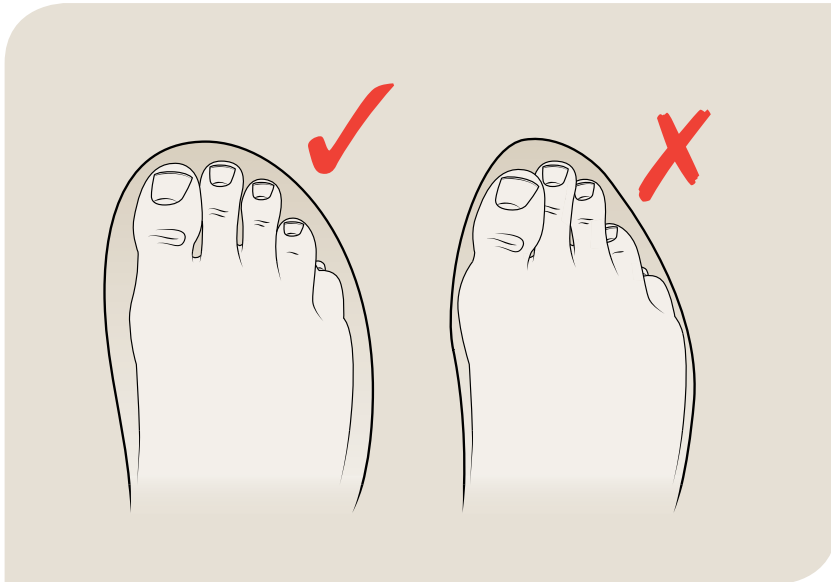
Well-fitted footwear will support and protect your feet and help prevent you from developing problems in the future.

## What can I do when buying shoes?

Always check for the following:

### Good shoes:

- Have adequate room around the toes
- Have a firm, supportive heel
- Have a heel height less than 2.5cm (1 inch) – high heels cause pressure on the ball of your foot
- Have laces or Velcro straps to allow you to adjust the fit
- Have cushioned insoles
- Have smooth seams without protruding stitching or studs inside the shoe. Feel inside the shoe with your hand to ensure it is smooth



## What else?

- The shoes you wear everyday should have the features already listed. It is important to wear these shoes at home as well as when you go out. Avoid wearing slippers or bare feet around the home
- Do not wear 'scuffs' or thongs on your feet as these do not support your feet and can cause clawing of your toes as you try to keep them on



- New shoes should be immediately comfortable. You should start by wearing new shoes for short periods of time. Check for signs of damage such as redness, sore spots or discharge. If you see any of these signs, immediately stop wearing the shoes. If symptoms do not resolve, contact your podiatrist for advice
- Get your feet measured by a professional each time you buy new shoes. Foot size and shape change over time
- If you cannot access a professional to measure your foot, ask someone to do it for you. A simple idea to check shoe size is to draw around your feet onto cardboard while you are standing. Cut out this template. Put the template in the shoes that you are trying on and ensure that the card fits correctly
- Shop for shoes in the afternoon when your feet are at their largest. Most feet tend to swell during the day
- Be aware that wearing shoes you have set aside for special occasions, such as weddings or appointments, could rub or damage your feet. Your feet may have changed shape since you last wore them

# What can I do when buying socks?

## Good socks:

- Have loose elastic tops
- Have minimal seams across the toes
- Are made mainly of natural fibres
- Have padded insoles



## Tips to remember

- 1 Request an urgent podiatry (foot specialist) review if you have any signs of damage to your feet. Ensure you describe the damage when you ring to make the appointment so that the podiatrist understands the urgency of seeing you
- 2 Seek professional assistance when buying new shoes
- 3 Never walk barefoot as this increases your risk of being injured

## References

Department of Health, NSW Government (2010) *Model of care for the high risk foot*. [www.healthnetworks.health.wa.gov.au/modelsofcare/docs/High\\_Risk\\_Foot\\_Model\\_of\\_Care.pdf](http://www.healthnetworks.health.wa.gov.au/modelsofcare/docs/High_Risk_Foot_Model_of_Care.pdf) (accessed March 2011)

Australasian Podiatry Council. *Footwear selection brochure*. [www.podiatryvic.com.au/Public/Publications.htm](http://www.podiatryvic.com.au/Public/Publications.htm) (accessed November 2010)

## Disclaimer

This health care guide is part of the 'Connected Wound Care' program, which provides important information about wound care. All care has been taken to ensure information is current and best-practice, however always consult your healthcare professional if you have any concerns or queries.

## Acknowledgements

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