



9: DIABETES AND CHRONIC WOUNDS

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As we saw in factsheet 2, diabetes increases your risk of experiencing a chronic wound. Diabetes is a disease that affects how the body uses glucose, a key source of energy for the body and brain. Diabetic foot disease is a potential complication that can be treated successfully if identified early.

DIABETES-RELATED FOOT ULCERS (DFUS)

People with diabetes are prone to foot ulcers because:

- Their condition causes the blood vessels to the feet to narrow, restricting blood flow and affecting the body's ability to heal foot wounds. This is called peripheral vascular disease.
- Too much glucose in the bloodstream can damage nerves in the legs and feet, causing numbness. This is called peripheral neuropathy. It means that people with diabetes may not notice small cuts or blisters on their feet in good time, giving them a chance to develop into hard-to-heal ulcers.

There are three main types of DFUs:

- Ischaemic: caused by poor circulation (peripheral vascular disease)
- Neuropathic: caused by a loss of sensation (peripheral neuropathy)
- Neuro-ischaemic: caused by a combination of poor circulation and loss of sensation.

If they can't be healed, foot ulcers can have extremely serious consequences, including amputations of toes or limbs. The wound resulting from an amputation is also at risk of infection for the same reasons: because circulation and sensation problems impede healing.



THE WOUND WARNING SIGNS

- ✓ Hot and painful
- ✓ Smells bad
- ✓ Oozing thick yellow liquid
- ✓ 30+ days to heal



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Consumer education about chronic wounds by experts at the national peak body, Wounds Australia. Find more factsheets for consumers on our website.



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PREVENTION

Preventing DFUs from developing is ideal, and the best way to do this is through properly managing your diabetes. This includes:

- Good blood glucose control
- A healthy diet
- Regular physical activity
- Caring for the skin on your feet (see factsheet 10).

A twice-yearly foot check by a health care professional with the right skills and equipment to properly assess circulation and sensation.

If you are diabetic and have wounds on your feet, no matter how small, please see a healthcare professional immediately. Diabetic foot ulcers can develop quickly, be hard to heal and have serious consequences. You'll find a list of sources of professional wound care advice in factsheet 6.


 **In factsheet 10, we'll explore how to care for diabetic feet.**



ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Good sources of advice about wounds include:

- Wound care clinicians
- GPs
- Nurses
- Pharmacists
- Podiatrists
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers
- Diabetes educators
- Some allied health professionals such as dietitians, occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

 **Find out more about healthcare professionals working with wounds in factsheet 6 on our website.**

Care professional? Join Wounds Australia for events, guidelines, discounts and more:
woundsaustralia.org