

# Footcare at home

## Guidance for people with dementia and those who support them



Over the coming weeks and months we are all being asked to change the way we live our lives so that those who are at most risk of coronavirus are kept as safe as possible. For people with dementia and their families and carers this period of change will be unsettling. Not being able to go about your daily routine or undertake the activities you normally do, could be quite stressful.

In collaboration with allied health professionals, we are preparing a range of information to help you through this time and this guide is one example. This sheet has been written in partnership with podiatrist, who can help you by diagnosing, treating, rehabilitating and preventing foot, ankle and lower limb problems. This can assist you with sustaining an active and healthy lifestyle by helping you to maintain your mobility. If you need more information please call our 24 hour Freephone Dementia Helpline on 0808 808 3000 and we will do our very best to help you.

Personal footcare is important for everyone, as good foot health can reduce pain or discomfort, improve confidence, quality of life and independence. Healthy feet can help us to remain physically active, allowing us to participate in the activities we enjoy. However, neglecting personal footcare needs can contribute to poor health and reduced wellbeing including falls, which might otherwise be avoided. During this time when our normal activities may be restricted and we may not be able to have the same access to a podiatrist, there are things we can all be doing at home to look after our feet.

### Helpful tips for looking after our feet at home:



#### **Wear appropriate footwear**

If you are spending more time at home, it might be tempting to walk around barefoot or with our old comfy slippers on. Trainers are better than house shoes, walking barefoot or slippers to keep feet protected. Always change your tights or socks daily. Cotton or wool are better than man-made fabrics as they allow for swelling and absorbing perspiration. If you are going out walking more often during this time, again make sure you wear your shoes to prevent pain and discomfort. Badly fitting shoes are a common cause of irritation or damage to feet. Check the bottom of your shoe before putting them on to make sure that nothing sharp has pierced the other sole and run your hand inside each shoe to check for small objects such as small stones that may have fallen in.



#### **Check your feet every day**

You should check your feet every day for any blisters, breaks in the skin, pain or any signs of infection. If you cannot do this yourself, ask your partner or carer to help you. Look out for any changes such as swelling, heat or redness. If you have any concerns seek help from your local podiatrist or your GP.



### Wash your feet daily

Try to shower and wash your feet every day in warm water and with mild soap. Rinse them thoroughly and then dry them carefully, especially in between the toes before putting on your socks and shoes. If you are unable to get into the shower or bath regularly, it may be easier to wash your feet using a basin. Don't soak your feet as this can reduce the natural oils of the foot, causing dry skin.



### Put lotion on your feet daily.

Use moisturising lotion on your feet every day, especially if your skin is dry, but don't put any between the toes as this may cause the skin to become fissured (opening). Remove hard skin by gently rubbing with a pumice stone or foot file. It is most effective after washing the feet.

Don't use any sharp objects on your feet. If you have painful calluses, thick lesions on the bottom of your feet, or corns on your toes **do not** use any sharp implement to cut those it's very dangerous. If you are in pain contact your NHS Podiatry service or local private podiatrist for advice.



### Try to keep your toenails comfortable

Cut or file your toenails regularly (approximately twice a week) using proper nail clippers, following the curve of the end of your toe. Cut straight across and not too short or down the corners as they may create a "spike" of nail which could result in an ingrown toenail. Make sure that there are no sharp edges which could press into the next toe.

For thickened nails you can file the length and thickness. The nail is already damaged, so filing the thickness won't cause any further damage but can reduce discomfort. Long-handled emery board files are ideal and can be purchased from many high street shops. Change your socks, stockings or tights regularly. They should not have bulky seams and the tops should not be elasticated.

If you're unsure about something, it's always better to call your podiatrist or GP than to take things into your own hands or ignore any issue. Podiatrists are still seeing patients based on current Government guidelines which are frequently updated. . If you are worried about low mood or pain you can still seek medical assistance, the NHS is still there for you during this time. Speak to your GP or you can call NHS24 on 111.

### Helpful links

#### Personal Footcare: Looking After Your Feet:

<http://www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/media/7090931/final%20looking%20after%20your%20feet%20booklet%20220813.pdf>

#### Personal Footcare: Looking After Someone Else's Feet:

[www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/media/7090934/final%20looking%20after%20someone%20else%27s%20feet%20booklet%20220813.pdf](http://www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/media/7090934/final%20looking%20after%20someone%20else%27s%20feet%20booklet%20220813.pdf)

