

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 podiatrists, 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. Good foot health can reduce discomfort and pain, prevent health complications, maintain mobility and improve both independence and quality of life. Having healthy feet can help you to remain physically active and allow you to participate in the activities you enjoy. However, neglecting personal footcare can contribute to poor health and reduced wellbeing, which can be avoided. During this time when your normal activities may be restricted and you may not be able to have the same access to a podiatrist, there are things you can do to look after your feet.

Helpful tips for looking after our feet at home:



Wear appropriate footwear

Avoid walking barefoot or in old slippers at home as these can cause foot strain or falls. Instead try trainers or your normal shoes to protect and support your feet. Make sure to change your socks or tights daily too. If you are going out, make sure your shoes fit properly. Check the bottom of your shoes to ensure nothing sharp has pierced the soles and run your hand inside them to check for objects such as small stones. At this time it can also be harder to buy new shoes. If someone is buying them for you then try giving them a template of your feet by standing on paper and drawing around your feet. This can be slid inside a shoe. If it curls up at the sides or front then the shoe is too small.



Check your feet every day

You should check your feet every day for any discolouration, blisters, breaks in the skin, pain or any signs of infection (i.e. redness, heat, swelling, pain, loss of function). A hand mirror can help with this. If you have any concerns seek help from your NHS Podiatry service or local HCPC registered private podiatrist for advice.



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 daily, especially if your skin is dry. Don't put any between your toes as it can lead to infections. Reduce hard skin by gently rubbing with a pumice stone or foot file. Just after you have washed your feet is best. You may have areas of yellowish thick skin on your toes or feet. These are calluses and corns which can be painful. **DO NOT** use any sharp implement to cut these as it's very dangerous. Do not use any creams or plasters which contain acids to remove them. If you are in pain, contact a podiatrist for advice.



Try to keep your toenails comfortable

You can file (1 to 2 times per week) or cut your toenails to help keep them comfortable.

If you choose to cut your toenails then it is best to use proper nail nippers. Do not cut them too short. It is safest to cut straight across, cutting down the sides can cause a wound or an ingrown toenail. Once cut, file with an emery board to ensure there are no sharp edges. If you have problems with the sensation in your feet, or your vision, ask a family member or carer for help. If you have been advised not to cut your own nails, or have any difficulty, please contact your NHS Podiatry service or local HCPC registered private podiatrist for advice.

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

