

## Things to look for

- Any new areas of open skin, blisters or change in colour
- Increased discharge or smell from the ulcer
- Increased pain (if you have neuropathy you will not feel it)
- More swelling in the affected area
- Colour changes surrounding the ulcer e.g. redness or blackness
- Increased heat and warmth in the affected area
- Increased levels in your blood sugar
- Generally feeling unwell; raised temperature, nausea.

If you notice any of the above symptoms you must seek professional advice from the podiatrist, diabetes specialist nurse, practice nurse, GP or your hospital department without delay. You will need to ask for an urgent appointment (within 24hrs)

## General advice

Eating a healthy diet will provide the nutrition you need that will help heal your foot ulcer and help balance your blood sugar levels (if you would like further information please speak to your practice nurse or a dietitian).

If you smoke have you considered stopping – this could be the right time as it would help your foot ulcer to heal more quickly. If you think you need some help in this area, speak to any health care professional NOW for advice and support.

# You and your foot ulcer



A general guide to help you care for yourself and your foot ulcer

## What is a foot ulcer?

- A foot ulcer is an open area on the foot that has been there for over 1 week
- It may be small but it can develop into a serious problem unless you get treatment for it soon
- They are caused by pressure, loss of sensation (neuropathy) poor circulation and trauma, usually a combination of these things.

## Can they become infected?

- Yes, and you may need to be given antibiotics for many weeks as some infections are difficult to treat.

**If you don't understand when to take the tablets please ask your pharmacist, GP or podiatrist**

## What is the treatment?

- You will need antibiotics if there is an infection, take the correct course – if you get diarrhoea stop the tablets and contact your GP
- Remove the pressure from the ulcer and the surrounding area
- The dead skin around the ulcer will need to be removed by the podiatrist regularly (this may cause slight bleeding which is quite normal)
- Keep the ulcer covered with dressings – these may change during your treatment.

## Having diabetes and a foot ulcer:-

It is crucial to maintain blood sugar levels at a healthy range, as this will help your foot ulcer to heal

- Aim for levels between 4-7 mmols/L before breakfast
- Aim for levels between 4-9 mmols/L two hours after a meal

Any illness or infection will cause your blood sugars to go higher than normal (which will delay healing) If your blood sugars are raised you will need to take more of your diabetes medication (tablets or insulin) you may find it helpful to discuss this with your diabetes nurse

## How do I keep pressure off my foot ulcer?

- You may not be able to wear your own shoes until the ulcer has healed
- You may need to wear
  - Below knee cast (similar if you break your leg) and use crutches
  - A dressing sandal
  - A scotch cast boot
  - An air-cast boot

Wearing the device that you are given (sandal or cast) **at all times**, even when getting up at night to go to the toilet, will help your foot ulcer to heal more quickly.

If you have any questions or concerns please ask the person who is treating you.