Looking after yourself

- If you are Diabetic keep your blood glucose levels under control. This is important for wound healing.
- Rest your foot as much as possible keeping your legs elevated. You may need to reduce your daily activities.
- Give up smoking - ask your Doctor / Nurse or Podiatrist for advice. Smoking will delay healing.
- You need to eat well to heal well.
- Do not stop taking any antibiotics prescribed unless directed.
- Ensure you use any special insoles / shoes / pressure reducing devices you have been given.

Seek help immediately if:

- Your foot becomes hot, red, swollen, painful or develops an unpleasant smell.
- Increased pain or redness spreading up the foot or leg or a change in overall colour of the foot.
- There is an increase in the amount of fluid coming from the ulcer.
- You become unwell with feverish flu like symptoms.
- If you are Diabetic and your blood sugars rise contact the Podiatrist / Nurse / GP immediately, as these symptoms might suggest an infection.

Compliments, comments, concerns or complaints?
If you have any compliments, comments, concerns or complaints and would like to speak to somebody about them please telephone: 01773 525119

Are we accessible to you?
This publication is available on request in other formats (for example, large print, easy read, Braille or audio version) and languages. For free translation and/or other format please telephone: 01246 515224 or e-mail us at: DCHST.communications@nhs.net

Contact telephone numbers:

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What is a Foot ulcer?

An ulcer is a medical term for an open sore, no matter how large or deep. It is an open area that has lost the protective layer of skin, which is likely to weep, and could develop an infection if left untreated.

What causes foot ulcers?

- Ill fitting footwear
- Injury
- Walking barefoot
- Dry skin
- Poor foot hygiene

Foot deformity, poor blood supply or nerve damage to the feet can increase the risk of developing a foot ulcer.

Treating your ulcer

Following assessment a treatment plan will be agreed between yourself and the Podiatrist / Nurse. This will include:

- **Debridement (when appropriate)**
  Debridement is the term used to remove hard skin / callus or dead or infected tissue. It is not normally painful. Studies have shown that appropriate debridement of foot ulcers helps them to heal faster.

Benefits of debridement:
- It reveals the full size of the ulcer
- Reduces pressure on the edge of the ulcer
- Reduces the risk of trapped infection

The quickest way to debride an ulcer is with a sharp instrument called a scalpel. If this is not appropriate a suitable dressing may be used to encourage the ulcer to debride itself.

Following debridement the ulcer may appear bigger or it may bleed, but it will be a cleaner ulcer and any areas of bleeding will be dressed by the Podiatrist.

- **Regular dressings**
  The choice of dressing might change as the ulcer changes to give it the right conditions to heal. The Podiatrist / Nurse will give advice.

- **Pressure Relief**
  Any pressure exerted on your ulcer either from footwear or walking will slow down the healing process. The Podiatrist will discuss with you the different ways of taking away pressure and decide which way would be best for you.

Will I need specialist tests?

Sometimes tests may be necessary such as:

- A swab from the ulcer to help identify bacteria which may be causing the infection.
- Circulation tests on your legs and feet.
- Blood tests.
- X-ray or scan to help determine if the infection is in the bone.

Do I need to take antibiotics?

Only if the ulcer is infected. You will receive individual advice if you develop an infection.

Looking after your dressing

- Keep the dressing in place and keep it dry.
- If the dressing starts to come off, keep it in place with micropore (available from the Chemist).
- Follow the dressing change advice given by the Podiatrist.
- Use any special footwear / insoles to relieve pressure from the ulcer.
- Check the dressing daily to make sure it has not moved and check feet to ensure there are no changes, such as redness spreading up the foot. You must attend all review appointments to ensure the ulcer is not deteriorating.