

Footwear Advice

How to Reduce the Risk of Foot Ulcers

Information for patients



Podiatry Department

What is this leaflet about?

Your Podiatry assessment has shown that you are at greater risk of foot ulcers (wounds). Badly fitting footwear is one of the most common causes of ulcers and it is therefore very important to make sure that you wear suitable shoes.

Some reasons why you may be at higher risk of foot ulcers include:

- Poor circulation
- Diabetes
- Foot deformity (e.g. bunions, clawed toes)
- Neuropathy (nerve damage which means you cannot feel your feet)
- Conditions and treatments which delay healing (e.g. rheumatoid arthritis)

This leaflet gives you advice on how to select a suitable shoe to reduce your risk of foot ulcers, which can lead to infection and amputations.

Good fitting shoes

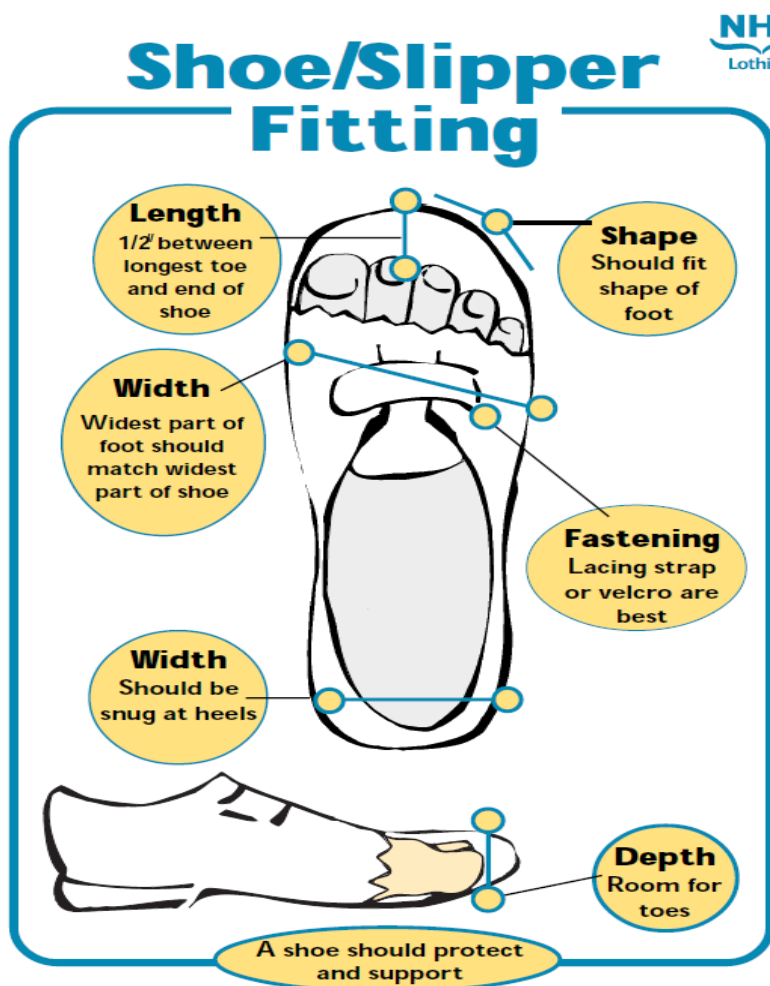
A good fitting shoe is long enough, deep enough and wide enough for your feet. If they are too tight or short, they will rub your toes and cause ulcers.

Shoes with straps or Velcro fastening will give your feet the best support. These fastenings help to keep your feet securely in place and reduce your risk of falls. Slip-on or loose fitting shoes do not offer support and can cause the skin to rub and create ulcers.

The heel should be no more than an inch high. A higher heel forces you to put too much weight on your toes and forefoot which is damaging to your skin as well as the bones and joints of your feet over time.

Choose a shoe with a thick rubber sole. This will help to cushion and protect your skin and joints better than very thin or hard soles. It should be difficult to bend the shoe using your hands. If it is very easy to bend then it means that the sole is too soft and not supportive enough.

Shoes with softer materials over the tops of the toes are a good choice for patients who have toes which have changed shape, such as clawed toes or hammer toes and those with bunions.



Helpful tips

Ideally you should get your feet measured properly, but if this isn't possible you should at least try shoes on before buying them.

You should always try them on both feet to check the fit of each. It's normal for one foot to be a slightly different shape or size to the other. If this is the case, then select a shoe which fits the bigger foot.

Be aware that shoe sizes vary between shops and styles. Your foot size can also change over time, so you may need to try a few sizes and shapes to find a good fit for you.

If your feet tend to swell during the day, make sure that your footwear can accommodate this. Velcro shoes are easy to adjust throughout the day.

Wear socks with your shoes to ensure good hygiene and to protect your skin from friction.

Avoid shoes which have seams over the toes, as these can damage the skin. You should also feel inside the shoe with your hands to check there are no unusual bumps or jagged stitches which could cause problems.

Check inside your shoes for loose objects each time you put them on and check the soles for nails and drawing pins which can get picked up.

Check your shoes for wear and tear and repair or replace them quickly.

We encourage you to discuss any questions or concerns that you may have with your Podiatrist and invite you to bring shoes to your appointment that you would like us to review.

If you notice any breaks in your skin, you should contact the Podiatry Department immediately:

Telephone Number: