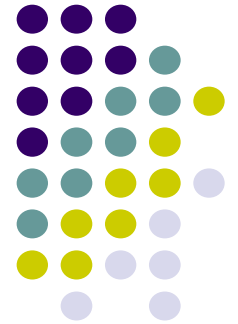


# Diabetes and Foot care



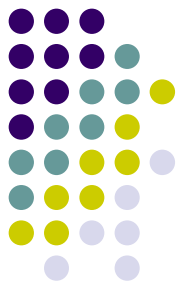
Vanessa Nubé  
Diabetes Centre  
Royal Prince Alfred Hospital





# Diabetes

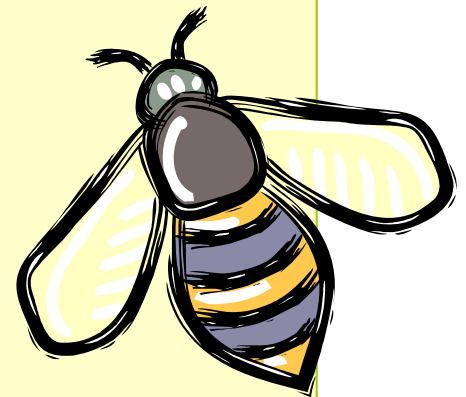
- In Australia, 1 in 4 adults (>25) have diabetes or pre-diabetes
- Diabetes can cause damage to the blood vessels and nerves leading to severe foot problems.
- About 15% of people with diabetes will develop a serious diabetic foot problem in their lifetime
- Most hospital admissions for people with diabetes are for foot problems



# Who is at risk of Diabetes ?

## Be tested for diabetes if you are:

- over 40 years of age
- overweight
- have a family history of diabetes
- had gestational diabetes or are
- at high ethnic risk





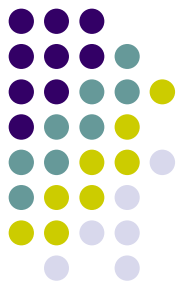
# How can diabetes affect the feet?

## 1. **Loss of sensation** (peripheral neuropathy)

- Injuries occur without pain
- People delay seeking help
- Peripheral neuropathy

also contributes to muscle weakness and foot deformities

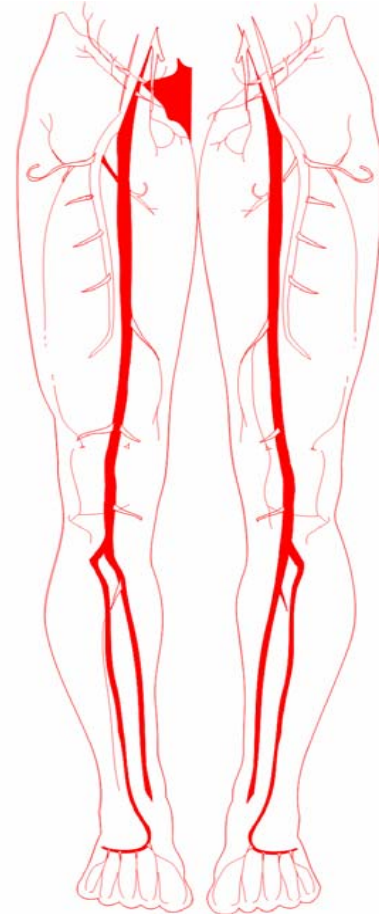




# How can diabetes affect the feet?

## 2. Poor circulation

- Pain in calf muscles when walking or climbing stairs/incline
- Burning pain in feet at night
- Poor healing of wounds on the feet and legs

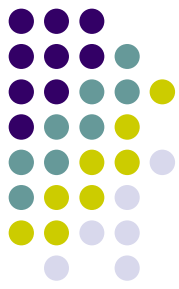




## **Other effects of diabetes on the feet**

3. Stiffening of the joints
4. Muscle weakness
5. Foot deformities
6. Skin changes
7. Slower healing due to high blood sugar

# Foot ulceration in people with diabetes



# Are all people with diabetes at equal risk of foot ulcers?



No



# Who is most at risk of diabetic foot problems?



Risk factors include:

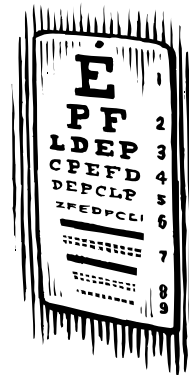
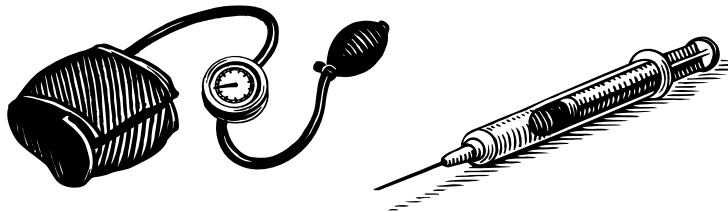
- Long duration of diabetes
- Advanced age
- High BSL
- Poor circulation
- Smoking
- Alcohol abuse



# How do you know if you are at risk of serious diabetic foot problems?



Have your feet assessed once a year by your GP as part of your diabetes check-up, or by a podiatrist.





# Foot Risk Assessment

- Check for nerve damage
- Check for poor circulation
- Examine feet for skin, joint and nail problems
- Assess footwear



# Causes of foot ulceration in people whose feet are at high risk



Untreated callus and corns (hard skin)

# Causes of foot ulceration in people whose feet are at high risk



Clawed toes



Thickened and/or  
ingrown toenails

# Causes of foot ulceration in people whose feet are at high risk

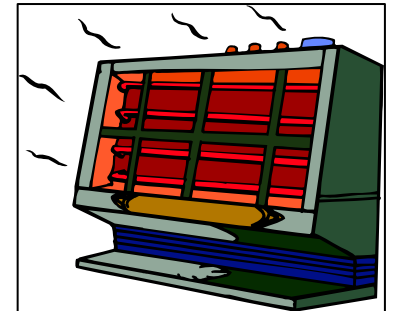
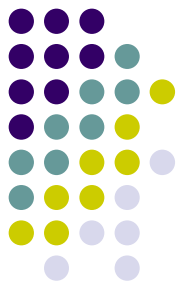


Tinea between the toes



Cracked heels

# Causes of foot ulceration in people whose feet are at high risk



Treading on sharp objects

burns

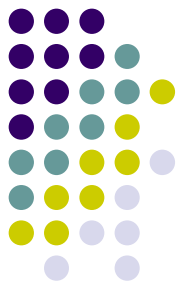
# Causes of foot ulceration in people whose feet are at high risk



- Shoes are a common cause of foot ulcers
- Select shoes with care and have them checked by your podiatrist before wearing
- Wear shoes in gradually, monitoring for signs of trauma/pressure



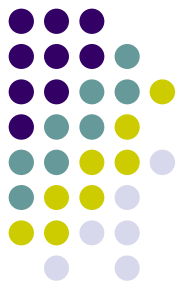
# How to prevent ulcers in people who are at high risk



## Self care

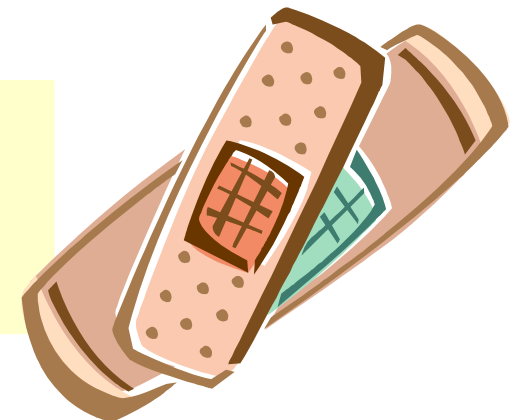
- Daily foot inspection to check for injuries
- Apply moisturising cream to dry skin to prevent cracked skin and fissures
- No walking barefoot
- Avoidance exposing feet to sources of heat
  - *Eg. electric blankets, hot water bottles, heaters*

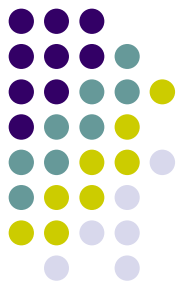
# How to prevent ulcers in people who are at high risk



- First Aid: Clean with water, apply dressing, rest the area and seek help if not healed in 48 hours
- See a podiatrist for regular treatment of toenail abnormalities, calluses etc

**Seek help early for any foot problem !**





# Choosing the right shoes

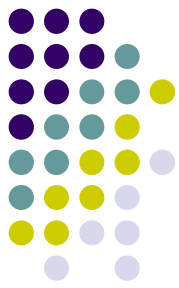
- Leather upper
- Deep and wide enough at the toe to fit toes
  - Round toe with 1 thumb width at the end
- Firm, enclosed heel counter (no sling backs)
- Laces (or velcro) to keep the foot from sliding
- Flexible rubber soles 5-10mm thick
- No rough seams inside



# Foot ulcers and infections

- Multidisciplinary care:  
Involving medical, nursing and podiatric care
- Early treatment will most often prevent amputation

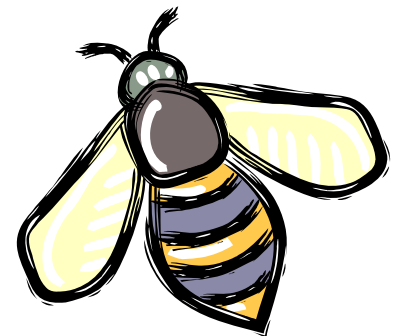


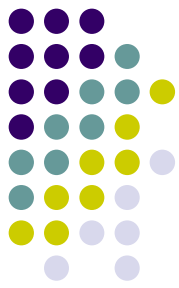


# Remember:

Serious foot problems can be **PAINLESS**  
in people with diabetes

Seek help **EARLY**  
for any foot problem if you have diabetes

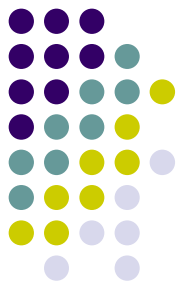




# For more information

- Diabetes Australia:
  - Healthy Feet are Happy Feet
  - Diabetic Footcare brochures
- [diabetes@usyd.edu.au](mailto:diabetes@usyd.edu.au)
- “Lower limb ulcers in people with diabetes”  
NSW Department of Health booklet for health professionals

# Problems with the provision of footwear for people at risk



- Normal shaped feet can be fitted with regular “sports shoes”
- Cost of orthopaedic/custom made footwear can be prohibitive
- “Provision of Aids for Disabled People” (PADP) funding associated with lengthy delays and complex referral pathways
- Inadequate guidelines lead to poor outcomes and wasted funds





# Foot ulcers and infections

- Infections need to be treated urgently with oral or intravenous antibiotics
- May need to be admitted to hospital but mostly treated on an outpatient basis

