



# Diabetes & Footcare

Information and precautions



*A step-by-step guide to causes, concerns and proper treatment **for your feet***

FOOTWEAR + ORTHOTICS



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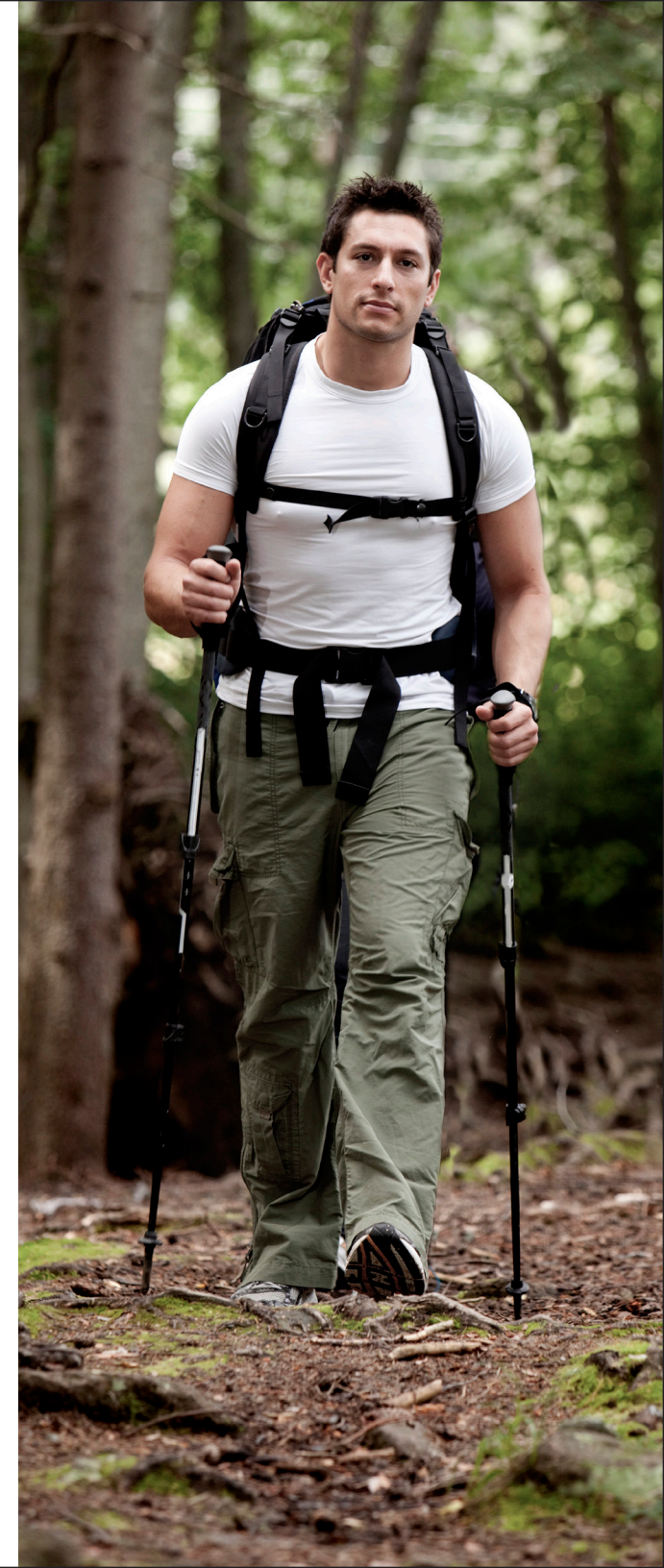
Information and precautions

Wearing the wrong shoes can lead to a variety of foot, knee and lower back problems.

Proper footwear selection is important to your overall health. Shoes play an integral role in supporting your entire body. It is critical that they provide both the proper cushioning and support to minimize wear and tear on your joints and reduce muscle strain.

When looking for shoes, check if the store has a Canadian Board Certified Pedorthist on staff. Pedorthists specialize in fitting the proper footwear that work best for your feet. They also design custom foot orthotics if they have been prescribed.

If you suffer from bunions, other toe deformities, arthritis or diabetes, it is even more important that you visit our trained specialists to ensure you get the proper fit.



# Diabetes and Footcare

## How Does Diabetes Affect My Feet?

Diabetes causes your blood sugar levels to be higher than normal. Over time, high blood sugar levels can damage the blood vessels and nerves in your body. Damage to your nerves means that you may have burning pain or lose feeling in a part of your body (this is called diabetic neuropathy). Damage to the blood vessels in your feet means that your feet may not be getting a good supply of blood.

People with diabetes often have trouble with their feet. Part of the problem is that the loss of feeling in your feet makes it hard for you to tell if you have a blister or sore. If little sores aren't taken care of, they can get worse and turn into ulcers (serious, deep sores). If these ulcers become infected, you may have to go to the hospital or, in very serious cases, have a foot amputated (removed). This handout will give you some tips on how to care for your feet.

## Peripheral Neuropathy

Peripheral neuropathy is the gradual loss of nerve function in the feet and legs. Constant elevated blood glucose can damage nerve endings, causing numbness or a tingling feeling in the feet.

The most common and significant change that is related to this condition is loss of feeling or touch sensation. However, neuropathy is heightened by pain and it usually comes on slowly. The likelihood of developing neuropathy increase with age.



## What Is A Foot Ulcer?

A foot ulcer is a defect or break in the skin which leaves the foot vulnerable to invasion from harmful bacteria that can cause infection. The longer the ulcer remains open and untreated, the greater risk of infection.

Conditions such as peripheral neuropathy and vascular disease are some of the causes of infection and ulceration in those living with diabetes.

## Compression Socks

People with diabetes are at risk for several foot complications, including loss of feeling, impaired circulation and delayed wound healing. The first line of protection for your feet is a sock that is specifically designed for the unique needs of people with diabetes. These socks have these key features:

- Seamless, constriction-free design prevents the friction and irritation that can cause a blister or sore
- Moisture management system that wicks away excess moisture because moisture can act as a breeding ground for infection-causing bacteria

A Human Kinetic Specialist at Kintec Footlabs can help you to find the best sock to meet your needs. These compression socks help reduce foot and leg swelling by increasing blood flow. The gradual compression alleviates circulation problems and muscle fatigue, helping you feel revitalized and energetic throughout the day



## Selecting Proper Footwear

- Have your shoes fitted properly by a trained specialist such as a Canadian Certified Pedorthist.
- Key features for diabetic footwear include soft uppers with minimal seams, deep and wide toe boxes to reduce abnormal pressure, firm but cushioned soles, removable insoles, a strong heel counter, and a rocker sole.
- Lace up shoes offer a versatile fit and should be used if possible or alternatively use Velcro closures if tying laces is difficult.
- Avoid slip-on and restrictive footwear such as high heels with pointed toes or shoes that are narrow in style as they depend on a tight fit to stay on the foot.

## 5 Footcare Tips:

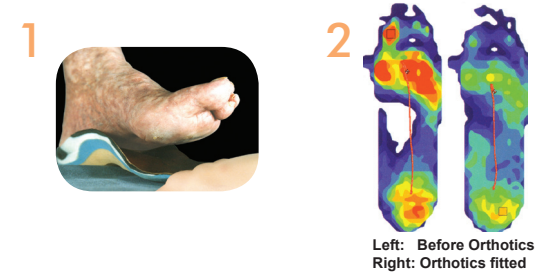
- 1 Inspect your feet and between your toes daily. Look for swollen areas, red areas, and cuts or breaks in the skin and feel for very cold areas (this could mean poor blood circulation) and very warm areas (this could mean infection).
- 2 Never go barefoot. Although this is a good rule for everyone, it is really important for people who have lost sensation in their feet. Wear swimmers' shoes whenever you go swimming.
- 3 Make a habit of cutting your toenails to follow the curve of your toe. This helps you avoid ingrown toenails.
- 4 If you have a loss of sensation in your feet or have neuropathy, you may not be able to trust how a shoe feels to decide whether the fit is good for you. Find a footwear specialist who is trained to fit people with diabetes.
- 5 Never try amateur surgery on your feet. Have your provider or podiatrist treat calluses, corns, plantar warts, and the like.

## Orthotics & Diabetes

Uniform and improved pressure distribution is paramount to avoiding injury to the diabetic foot.

Soft, full contact orthotics are required to optimal pressure distribution. (fig.1)

Kintec's F-Scan system can pick up subtle pressure points between the foot and shoe or insole that the practitioner cannot otherwise see (note the red areas in the image). (fig.2)



## Avoiding Injuries

- If you have a problem with lower limb swelling, graduated compression stockings can help control swelling and improve the fit of shoes over the course of a day.
- Don't wear shoes without socks.
- Don't wear sandals or other open-toed shoes.
- Avoid high-heeled shoes and shoes with pointed toes.
- Talk to your doctor before you buy special shoes or inserts.
- Look inside your shoes every day for things like gravel or torn linings. These things could rub against your feet and cause blisters or sores.

