

# Foot Ulceration (skin tissue breakdown)

## Information sheet

### What is a foot ulcer?

This is a break in the skin and soft tissue on your foot that can often take time to heal.

### What causes ulcers?

- Poor circulation
- Poor or absent sensation
- Deformities related to arthritis causing high pressure areas
- Poor foot and leg function and changes to walking patterns
- Poor footwear

These factors can alter the skin's ability to respond to changes in pressures on the foot while walking putting the foot at risk of ulceration.

### What can help a foot ulcer heal?

Pressure reduction will help allow delicate tissue to heal. This can be achieved by resting the foot, using pressure relieving padding or insoles, orthopaedic footwear, total contact casts or other pressure relieving devices. Your Podiatrist will be able to advise what option(s) will be best for you. Ensuring there is adequate blood supply to the area will help to heal the tissue breakdown. Poor nutrition, smoking and some medications (such as steroids or anti-cancer drugs) can all affect the body's ability to heal an ulcer.

### How are foot ulcers treated?

A number of factors are involved with ulcer management. They include:

- The removal of hard skin and non-viable tissue which surrounds the wound using a blade (sharp debridement). Please note that the wound can look bigger after treatment and bleeding can occur. Please do not try and treat your ulcer in this way yourself.
- Pressure relief, such as padding, insoles or specialist footwear
- Wound swabbing to test for infection
- Antibiotic treatment in the presence of infection
- Vascular assessment and intervention to improve blood circulation if necessary
- X-rays, bone scans or other specialist investigations.

## To assist in the management of your foot ulcer we ask you to:

- Follow your Podiatrist's advice on wound care and dressings
- Wear protective and do not walk around barefoot
- Wear (bespoke) footwear if this has been made for you
- rest the foot as much as possible
- eat a balanced diet
- stop or reduce smoking
- Keep wound dressings dry. A waterproof dressing protector can be requested from your doctor if needed (seal tight)

## Podiatry Wound Care Clinic

The team is based in the community for diagnosis, management and treatment of ulcerations. During regular assessment, the team can determine the cause of your foot ulcer and develop the most appropriate care plan for you. We may assess the sensation and circulation to your feet. We may take a photographic image of the ulcer to monitor its size. A review of your walking style and foot function may also be undertaken along with a discussion of your current footwear needs.

There are a number of wound care podiatrists in the team, so you may not see the same person at each visit. There are regular case conferences within the team to manage your case which will be discussed fully with you. As this is a teaching trust you may be asked if a student can partake in your assessments.

For non-healing wounds, osteomyelitis (bone infection) or Charcot foot (sudden bone softening in the foot in people with neuropathy) you may be referred to specialist hospital teams. The high risk foot clinic based at the hospital is a multi-disciplinary clinic with a team of health professionals including:

Wound care Podiatrists, Podiatric Surgeon, Diabetic consultant, Musculoskeletal Podiatrist; Orthotist.

There is also access to other health professionals such as the Vascular Surgeon, radiologists, microbiologist and plaster technicians.

## SOS Advice

If you notice a problem with your feet *please don't* ignore it, seek advice straight away. The signs that should cause concern and may be an indication of infection are:

- Any new ulcers or blistered areas on your feet
- Your foot becoming noticeably hotter than normal
- Any colour change; red or blue or bruising
- Any new areas of swelling on your feet
- Any discharge coming through the dressing where previously it was dry
- Any new pain or throbbing sensation
- Your foot developing an unpleasant odour
- Feeling feverish or unwell may also indicate the presence of infection.



## Contact us

### Oxleas Adults' Community Greenwich Podiatry Service

0208 320 3550

Monday – Friday

8:30am – 4:30pm

It is not always possible for us to answer the phone straight away.

Please leave a message and your call will be returned.

Please let us know if you require an interpreter or have any additional needs.