

# Healthy Living: Taking Care from Head to Toe<sup>1</sup>

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If you have diabetes, pay special attention to your skin, eyes, teeth, gums, and feet. These areas are at increased risk for complications due to your diabetes. Read on to learn how you can take care of your body from head to toe!

## Skin

Healthy skin is the first line of defense against infection. Tips for keeping your skin healthy include the following:



- ü Bathing or showering daily
- ü Towel-drying skin thoroughly but gently
- ü Preventing dry skin by using mild soaps and moisturizers—a humidifier in winter may help if the air is dry.
- ü **Don't** put lotion between your toes, in your skin folds, or in your armpits. Use powder to keep these areas dry.
- ü Treat cuts right away. Wash with soap and water and cover with a clean bandage. Use creams or ointments only if a member of your diabetes care team has recommended them.
- ü See a health care provider right away for major cuts, burns, or infections.
- ü Use sunscreen.
- ü See a dermatologist (skin doctor) about skin problems that need further treatment.

## Eyes

Having diabetes increases your risk for eye disorders including glaucoma, cataracts, and diabetic retinopathy (eye disease of the retina). Diabetic retinopathy is the most common complication of type-2 diabetes and is the leading cause of blindness in the U.S. Controlling blood glucose and blood pressure can help prevent or delay diabetic retinopathy. See an eye doctor right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- Blurry or double vision
- Trouble reading signs or books
- Pressure in your eyes
- Spots or floaters in your eyes
- Chronic red eyes
- Lines don't look straight
- Problems seeing things off to the side



See an eye doctor (ophthalmologist) every year for an eye exam. Doing so will increase the chance of detecting an eye disease early so it can be treated.

1. La versión en español de este documento es *Vida Saludable: Cuidándose de la cabeza a los pies* (FCS8821-Span). This document is FCS8821, one in a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences; Florida Cooperative Extension Service; IFAS; University of Florida; Gainesville, FL 32611. First published: December 2006. Revised: February 2011. Please visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>.

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## Teeth and Gums

People with diabetes, especially those with poor blood glucose control, are at increased risk for periodontal (gum) disease. Gum disease, if not treated, can ultimately lead to tooth loss. For healthy teeth and gums follow these tips:

- ü Brush teeth at least twice a day.
- ü Floss every day.
- ü Visit your dentist every six months for a routine cleaning and check-up.



See your dentist immediately if you have signs of gum disease, such as red, swollen, tender, or bleeding gums, bad breath, or changes in the way partial dentures or bridges fit.

***Be sure to tell your dentist and dental hygienist that you have diabetes and provide them with any changes in your health condition or medications you are taking.***

### Did You Know...

Smoking increases the risk of diabetes complications.



You can help prevent diabetes complications by not smoking and keeping your blood glucose level in a targeted range.

Talk to your diabetes care team to determine your targeted blood glucose level.

## Feet

Foot sores or ulcers can become infected, cause disability, and even lead to amputations. The good news is that foot sores can be prevented.



Have your feet checked annually by your health care provider and take care of your feet every day at home. Here are some ways to take care of your feet:

- ü Inspect your feet daily for red spots, cuts, swelling, or blisters. Use a mirror to help you see and check the bottoms of your feet.
- ü Wash your feet daily and dry them carefully, especially between your toes.
- ü Keep your skin soft and smooth with a thin coat of lotion on the tops and bottoms of your feet, but **not** between your toes. Use a lotion that does not contain alcohol and that is unscented.
- ü Trim toenails by trimming straight across and filing sharp edges with a nail file.
- ü Wear clean socks and shoes that fit well.
- ü Wear shoes and socks rather than walking barefoot. Check the insides of shoes before putting them on.
- ü Wear nonskid slippers in the house.
- ü Protect your feet from hot and cold conditions.
- ü Keep the blood flowing to your feet. Put your feet up when you sit; wiggle your toes and move your ankles. Don't keep your legs crossed for long periods.
- ü Talk to a health care provider if you develop open sores or infections, or if a toe becomes red and tender (this could be an ingrown toenail).

