Help for the Feet

Living with Diabetes

This is what I can do for my feet
Dear reader,
as a diabetic, you are particularly interested in the health of your feet – with good reason, as around seven per cent of all diabetics have foot problems, in some cases very serious problems. Many of these cases could have been avoided. If, yes if … So that you can prevent this early on, we are giving you this brochure today. With medical background knowledge and many practical tips we want to help you to have healthy feet even in old age.

» We explain why you, as a diabetic, have to pay special attention to your feet,

» We give you the best tips about how you can protect your feet against subsequent damage, and

» We show you what your specialist company can do for orthopaedic shoe technology for the health of your feet,

» So that you can live to a high age with healthy feet.

Your rahm team

We’d like to see you smiling.

Successfully treating the widespread disease diabetes

Every person affected can contribute greatly to optimising the course of the disease. Awareness of the proper diet and a healthy measure of physical activity are good pre-requisites. The greatest difficulty is that diabetes requires a lifelong adjustment of one’s habits. Continuity in the new, healthier lifestyle is decisive.

» Keep fit by bringing movement to your life. Increase your physical activity – at least 150 minutes per week.

» Keep to a varied and healthy diet. More complex carbohydrates (fibres) – less fat, protein and alcohol.

» Seek the advice of experts (diabetologists focussing on practice/internists with diabetes consultants or diabetes assistants). The specialist can competently decide whether and which medicines and/or insulin therapy are optimal for you.

» Pay special attention to your feet in order to maintain mobility and healthy feet. Here, the podiatrist (medical chiropodist) and experienced footwear specialists of the rahm service team advise you in collaboration with your doctor.

Today, living with diabetes is no longer a problem. Note important points from the very beginning. Your diabetes experts will support you here!
When the feet lose their form

Man diabetics complain about deformations of the feet. When the increased blood sugar level damages the nerves, the feet also suffer. The control over the muscles and the control of the joint position can namely suffer and can cause the following problems:

» Malpositions
» Overstressing of the bones of the feet and joints to the point of deformations of the toes
» Thick callous plates on the feet
» High pressure spot stressing
» In the worst case, these alterations cause rupturing of the tiny blood vessels in the tissue. Bacteria then enter via these tiny injuries and deep, poorly healing ulcerations can result.

The problem:
Such ulcerations often form unnoticed, as the warning signal pain is no longer correctly perceived.

What you can do:
Don’t forsake your feet! Don’t let it come to this stage! From the very beginning of the disease, take care of your feet.

With proper care and the optimal shoes, the chances are good that you will go through life with healthy feet. This care is worth the effort in any case. As your competent partner, rahm will support you in this.
Easy ways to prevent later problems

Damage to the feet – the doctor calls this the diabetic foot syndrome – are unfortunately not rare. In order to prevent such complications you should follow preventive measures early on and consistently:

Optimally regulate your metabolism!

When the metabolism is properly regulated, the danger of subsequent damage is enormously reduced. In concrete terms:

· Diabetes-oriented diet (e. g. with help of diet counselling also)
· Taking medication or insulin as required
· Regular movement
· Possibly loss of weight
· Medical treatment of high blood pressure and excessively high cholesterol values
· Refraining from smoking

Let a specialist from the medical supply store examine your feet!

The right shoes, insoles or other useful aids protect your sensitive feet against pressure points and injuries. The specialist will help you here:

· Exact analysis of the foot (status ascertainment)
· Risk assessment
· Competent counselling and individual solutions (of course in collaboration with your doctor)

Regularly control and care for your feet!

The sooner you notice foot damage, the better you can react to this and prevent worsening. Well groomed feet and nails are less susceptible to damage. We can provide contact to competent podiatrists (chiropodists).

(see page 14 for more information about proper grooming)

Your personal programme for healthy feet!

Preventive care is the best protection against subsequent damage.
Optimal Counselling

The orthopaedic footwear specialist: The best address for your feet

Not every diabetic suffers from the diabetic foot syndrome. The orthopaedic footwear specialist, as a specialist on the subject of feet and shoes, advises you individually and competently.

He examines the individual disease situation and can show you the optimal care requirements suited to your needs.

1) Status ascertainment
First, the orthopaedic footwear specialist carries out a status ascertainment, in order to determine the exact state of your feet:

» Controlling the joint position, form of the feet and position of the feet
» Ascertaining the condition of the skin on the feet
» Testing for nerve damage
» Controlling the distribution of pressure over the feet if required by foot stress analysis (pedography)

2) Risk assessment
The second step is the risk assessment:

» Evaluation of the data collected
» Individual counselling
» Developing a treatment concept perfectly tailored to your situation in collaboration with your doctor

3) Individuelle Versorgung
Finally, heel-toe aids, foot beds and/or shoes are fabricated in accordance with the treatment concept.
Within the scope of the risk assessment, the orthopaedic footwear specialist will advise you individually about the availability of modern aids.

There is a fundamental distinction between the following devices for diabetic prophylaxis:

**Soft cushioning insoles**
Individually fabricated loose insoles with a pronounced cushioning effect on the foot.
The soft insole prevents too great a pressure on the individual parts of the foot and reduces the risk of wounds due to non-uniform pressure distribution. The high-quality padding can be washed.

**Diabetes-adapted foot bedding**
Individually fabricated from different milled materials.
The bedding of the feet redistributes the pressure, especially relieves endangered points and prevents injuries to the tissue and pressure peaks. If you have an ulceration of the foot, we can fabricate a pointform soft recess. This relieves the tissue affected and promotes healing.

**Shoe finishings**
Shoe finishings improve the sequence of movements.
Modifying the sole of the shoe serves to ease the heel-toe movement and protect the foot. This relieves the foot, even in cases of severe problems.

a) Rolling the ball of the foot
relieves the metatarsophalangeal joints of the toes and simplifies forwards movement.

b) Butterfly shoes
Incorporate soft padding on the shoe to cushion the metatarsal joints of the feet.

c) Stiffening of the shoe soles
Incorporate a light plastic reinforcement in the shoe for immobilisation of the toes and the metatarsal joints.

**Interim shoes, double-shell orthosis, therapeutic shoes, surgical shoes**
Your orthopaedic footwear specialist offers special shoes adapted to a particular phase of treatment or recovery. For example, surgical shoes provide so much room that your foot fits in without pressure from the shoe, even with a bandaged wound.
Interim shoes
During the acute therapy which follows the master orthopaedic shoemaker offers an interim shoe adapted to your needs as prescribed by your doctor. The interim shoe can be adapted at any time to the changing conditions of the feet. It serves as a temporary solution and for fast mobilisation. Afterwards, definitive orthopaedic shoes tailored to your needs are provided.

Double-shell orthosis
Double-shell orthosis is a solution for the acute care of large ulcerations, amputated toes and acute Charcot’s foot. The aim of this care is the pronounced relief of the foot in order to promote healing of the wound.

Specially manufactured semi-orthopaedic shoes for diabetics
For persons with a particularly high risk, fashionable specially manufactured shoes are available for all-round protection.

The special features are:

- reinforced padding in the heel area
- completely padded interior
- padded and reinforced tongue
- sufficient volume in the front foot area
- extended rear caps on both sides
- soft front caps
- foot bed with soft padding
- padded front foot

Custom-made orthopaedic shoes
Individually manufactured shoes fitted to the patient’s foot form, with sufficient space for the foot and foot bedding.

Klassische Merkmale:
» Heel-toe movement and shock-absorbing properties
» Soft upper leather
» Special interior textile padding (washable)
» Not thick seams pressing on the foot
» Padded shank and tongue
» Easy to slip into
» No hard front caps

Diabetic stockings
In order to prevent pressure points and to promote healing, special diabetic stockings with silver thread should be worn.

The silver component in the stockings combats bacteria, fungi and odours. In the presence of neurodermatitis, athlete’s foot, wounds and irritations of the skin the silver component in the knitted fabric provides an anti-inflammatory and healing effect. The perfect fit also prevents the occurrence of pressure points.

- Soft top band, without elastic pressure
- Good fitting, thanks to Lycra
- Good fixation of heel
- Classically smooth, partly padded or fully padded
- Hand-linked, pressure-free closure in the toe area

In addition, there are many other orthopaedic aids which make life easier for diabetics. Your rahm specialist will be pleased to help you here.
The Right Care for Your Feet

**NEVER:**

- fail to trim your nails or use pointed objects.
- use a scraper on your feet, together with sharp objects.
- bathe the feet in hot water over a longer time.
- use hot water bottles.
- wear your shoes without socks.

**THE RIGHT CARE:**

- File the nails!
- Remove callous skin only with pumice. Use suitable cosmetic products.
- Bathe the feet only briefly – at most 5 minutes at maximum 28 °C.
- Wear warm socks and perform gymnastics for the feet.
- Wear socks to protect your feet. Diabetic stockings are particularly recommended.
The Right Care for Your Feet

The daily control

» Look particularly for tiny injuries, such as cracking or scratches. Blisters, callous skin, pressure points or other skin alterations reveal that something is not right in these areas. Perhaps your shoes, foot beddings or insoles must be adapted again or renewed.

» With a mirror or – still better – a magnifying mirror you can best control the soles of your feet.

» Self-control of the feet requires good vision and mobility. In case of doubt, ask a friend or relative to inspect your feet.

How you can avoid injuries to the feet

» Never walk about without shoes – not at home and certainly never outdoors.

» Always wear socks or stockings, even in your house.

shoes. This protects your feet against chafing. So-called diabetic socks, which protect the feet against pressure points and wounds, are also helpful.

» Shoes must also adequately protect your toes. Sandals, which are open at the front or have straps between the toes, are not able to provide protection. Such models are unsuited for you. A better choice is diabetic prophylactic shoes, which protect and relieve sensitive feet.

» Shoes which you wear for physically demanding work should be sufficiently large and have thick soles.

» After going walking or other stressful or thorough search your feet for injuries.

» Apply cream to your feet, including the soles, so that the skin does not dry out and become brittle and cracked. Make certain that the cream is completely absorbed. A wide range of diabetic care products is available for this purpose. Milking grease or vaseline are not suited for this, as they are not absorbed by the skin.
Training for the Blood Vessels

Your daily foot gymnastics

Many diabetics suffer from circulatory disturbances, particularly in the feet. And those not affected are at least in danger. The consequences can be very serious.

But you can do something about this yourself: Regular foot gymnastics train the blood vessels and improve circulation. The mobility of your joints and toes is better maintained. Repeat each exercise several times with the right and then with the left foot.

Exercise 1
» While seated set both feet flat onto the floor.
» Raise the front of the feet and let them circle towards the outside.
» Set the feet flat onto the floor.
» Raise the front of the feet and let them now circle towards the inside.
» Set the feet flat onto the floor.

Exercise 2
» While seated set both feet flat onto the floor.
» Raise the heels and let them circle towards the outside.
» Set the feet flat onto the floor.
» Raise the heels and let them now circle towards the inside.
» Set the feet flat onto the floor.

Exercise 3
» Sit on a chair, raise the knees and stretch the legs.
» Stretch the tips of the toes forwards, bend the knees and set the feet with the entire sole onto the floor.

Exercise 4
» Sit on a chair, raise one leg stretched and bring the tips of the toes towards the nose.
» Let the foot circle around the ankle: 10 times to the left and 10 times to the right.

Exercise 5
» With the toes, claw and crumple a page from a newspaper.
» Smooth it again with the feet.
» Tear the page from the newspaper with your toes.
» Grasp the paper shreds with the toes and clear away.

Immediately stop the exercises if you feel pain. Pain is a warning signal which you should not ignore!
How does one care for wound of the feet?

In spite of all precautions and proper care, wounds can occur in the feet which heal poorly.

In order to promote healing of such wounds, the advice of your doctor and medical assistance services, as well as the correct assortment of suitable products, are absolutely necessary. rahm offers professional wound therapy by specially trained personnel and supports you around the clock.

Our service:

1. Individual care
   » Cost-free examination of poorly healing wounds at your home, if requested
   » Therapy tailored to your individual needs, developed in collaboration with your doctor according to the most recent medical knowledge
   » Delivery of the required wound care materials to your home
   » Organisation of a care service at your home, if required, in order to ensure regular changing of bandages

2. Nursing
   » In order to ensure healing without problems you, your relatives or a medical assistance service is intensively trained.
   » Regular visits and examination of wounds by our wound therapists. The doctor and medical assistance service are informed about the course of therapy and healing.

   » Individual, competent professional in-house partners are available for unproblematic re-ordering.

3. Coordination and organisation
   » Upon request, our specialised personnel assume the co-ordination of all processes required for successful therapy. We continuously inform all persons concerned about the course of healing.
   » Continuous communication with the health insurance for the unproblematic continuation of therapy
   » Complete professionally written documentation in accordance with legal requirements. The documentation serves as information for all those concerned with the evaluation of healing process.
   » We work together with well-known manufacturers. The care which we offer is therefore based on the state-of-the-art in medical technology.
Background Knowledge

Why does a high blood sugar level endanger the health of my feet?

Living with diabetes – thanks to modern therapy, today this is no longer a problem. In spite of this, you must be careful with some things from the very beginning. This includes your feet in any case. You must pay greater attention to your feet than before, because problems with the feet can result from diabetes.

Preventive measures or the recognition of such health problems early on can prevent serious damage. The health of your feet also depends upon your blood values.

Problem zone blood vessels
Too much sugar in the blood can thicken the walls of the blood vessels and, over a period of time, impede blood circulation. The supply of oxygen and nutrients to the tissue is then restricted. Waste products of metabolism are less efficiently eliminated. The doctor refers to such damage to the blood vessels as „angiopathy“. This results e.g. in the destruction of tissue (gangrene), and wounds in the tissue affected heal more poorly, causing ulcerations of the feet.

Problem zone nerves
Unfortunately, some diabetics do not immediately recognise injuries and wounds. Over a longer period, elevated blood sugar values can attack the nerves and lead to their downright „sugar coating“. The nerves then become increasingly less sensitive to stimuli, such as pain. When the nerves are damaged, the doctor speaks of „neuropathy“. In such a case, the person affected senses no pain. However, if this warning signal is no longer perceived, minor injuries go unnoticed and, particularly with the feet, this can lead to complications which could have been prevented earlier.

Feet without feeling
Once the nerves are damaged, the perception of pressure, warmth and coldness deteriorates together with the perception of pain. Particularly with the feet, such a sensory loss can have very serious consequences. Our feet are enclosed in socks and shoes the entire day and have to bear the weight of the entire body with every step. Do the stockings chafe against the skin? Have minor injuries to the skin already occurred? Many persons with diabetes can no longer sense this properly. In order to prevent minor injuries from becoming major complications, diabetics must pay particular attention to their feet and shoes.

On the subject of healthy feet
rahm is your competent partner. Just ask us.
Healthy feet make for fun. We’d like to support you in keeping your feet healthy.

Good to know:
Services of your statutory health insurance
The initial outfitting with special or custom-made semi-orthopaedic shoes always comprises two pairs of street shoes and one pair of house shoes. Following the minimum wearing time of two years, the shoes can be replaced. After this time, you have no fundamental claim to the provision of shoes; this depends upon wear. A change or premature replacement of shoes is possible if the form of the foot changes or new wounds or complaints arise.
Which experts can help you further?

Chemist’s shop
Information about and source for medicine (everything prescribed; that is, tablets and insulin) and adjuvants (e.g. blood sugar test strips and the related measuring instruments, insulin pumps…). Parallel to this, there are also special mail order companies specialising in requirements for diabetics, which offer therapeutic aids. Seek a chemist’s shop close by with experience in the treatment of diabetes.

General practitioner / Licenced doctor for diabetes
Basic care, from diagnosis to therapy

Practice specialising in therapy for diabetes /
Diabetes team
Special qualification, with training and recognition by doctors and researchers of the Deutsche Diabetes-Gesellschaft (DDG) (German Diabetes Society). The number of these doctors specialising in the therapy of diabetes is increasing throughout the country. Their addresses can be found in many Internet diabetes pages (e.g. www.deutschediabetes-gesellschaft.de, www.diabetes-deutschland.de or www.diabetesweb.de). Alternatively, seek a practice close by specialising in the therapy of diabetes.

Diabetologists and diabetes team in the hospital or clinic and in special diabetes centres
Specialists for the care of diabetics, particularly for readjustment and complications or for difficult cases, or when hospitalisation is necessary.

Competent institutions and Other sources of Information:

Besides proper treatment, you are faced with the challenge of mastering living with diabetes. This deals with such important topics as „diabetes and the work place“, „diabetes and sport“, „diabetes in old age“ and „sexuality and family planning“.

Self-help groups for diabetics
In nearly every city there are self-help groups for diabetics. The Public Health Office, your health insurance, your doctor or your chemist can give you information about these. Many self-help groups are organised within the scope of the Deutsche Diabetiker Bund (DDB) (German Diabetics’ Association).

Head office
Goethestr. 27 · 34119 Kassel · Germany
Tel.: +49 (0)561 / 703 477 0 · Fax: +49 (0)561 / 703 477 1
info@diabetikerbund.de · www.diabetikerbund.de

Here you can find a self-help group close by.
For questions on the subject of diabetes you can reach us under the number +49 (0) 2241 908 – 210.

For HEADQUARTERS IN TROISDORFF
rahm Centre for Health GmbH · Iltisweg 1-3 · 53842 Troisdorf-Spich · Germany
Telefon: + 49 (0)2241 / 908-200 · Telefax: + 49 (0)2241 / 908-209

rahm – an 27 Standorten im Rheinland!
You can find the opening times and sketches showing how to find us in the Internet under: www.rahm.de/standorte.