

What should I do next?

Even if you don't have exactly the symptoms described in this leaflet, if you have any concerns about the condition of your legs or feet you should have them professionally assessed. In the first instance, speak to your doctor, nurse or local Leg Club, who will give you a thorough examination. This may include a full health check and review of the circulation in your legs.

What is a Leg Club?

Leg Clubs are a research-based initiative which provide community-based treatment, health promotion, education and ongoing care for people of all age groups who are experiencing leg-related problems.

The Leg Club nursing teams are employed by NHS local provider services, CCGs and GP consortia and the nurses incorporate the Leg Clubs into their everyday practice.

No appointment is required and the Leg Club opening hours should be available from the local surgery, community nurses' office, and adverts in the local parish magazine and village shops or from the Leg Club website www.legclub.org

Through education, ongoing advice and support from your Leg Club nurses, you will be made aware that care and prevention of recurrence of leg-related problems is for life.

Visit your nearest Leg Club

The Lindsay Leg Club Foundation
Ipswich, PO Box 689, IP1 9BN

Telephone

01473 749565

Email:

lynn.bullock@legclubfoundation.com

www.legclub.org

A Simple Guide to Foot Care

A simple guide to foot care



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The skin

The skin is the largest organ of the body, covering an area of about 2 square metres with a thickness that varies from 0.5mm on the eyelids to 4mm or more on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. Human skin has more than 11 miles of blood vessels and accounts for 16% of a person's body weight.

There are more bacteria covering a person's skin than there are people on earth, and their cells outnumber body cells by 10 to one. Most of these bacteria are 'good' bacteria that we cannot live without. Occasionally, 'bad' bacteria settle on the skin, but as long as the skin is intact it will keep us safe.

The skin has many functions, it:

- Protects internal organs and tissues.
- Acts as a barrier against infection.
- Regulates body temperature.
- Enables us to detect sensations such as touch, pain, heat and cold.

Being a visible organ, the skin also has an impact on our wellbeing and how we feel about ourselves.

However, as people age, the skin becomes thinner and less elastic, making it more susceptible to injury — any break in the skin increases the risk of microorganisms and other harmful elements from the environment entering the body and causing infection.

Good skin care is thus essential to maintain its integrity and keep it supple, smooth and elastic.

Remember, the skin covering the feet are not be overlooked, as it is just as important as any other area of the body.

The skin is so important for our health that we must take care of it, and not just act once problems occur, such as wounding or infection.

Heels and feet

The skin over the heels is vulnerable to drying out and cracking. It is also susceptible to pressure from tight shoes, or from placing the heel on the floor or bed for long periods of time.

Regularly moisturising the heel helps to protect against hardening and increases resistance to pressure. Any heel balm containing 25% urea will help to keep the heel moist and supple.



It has long been fashionable for women to wear high heels. Although this might seem 'chic' or elegant, a lifetime of wearing such shoes can damage feet, so it is advisable to wear shoes that are comfortable and fit well.

People with diabetes are particularly vulnerable to foot damage. Due to peripheral neuropathy they often cannot feel any pain in their feet and so do not realise if their shoes are not fitting properly. This can lead to blisters and pressure wounds, which can threaten the limb or even the life of the injured person. People with diabetes should regularly visit podiatrists and the diabetic foot team in their area.

There are specialist companies that produce comfortable shoes for those requiring support, and these shoes can often be found in pharmacies.

Corns

Corns and calluses are hard, thickened areas of skin, caused by rubbing, friction or pressure on the skin. They can make walking very painful.

Although products can be bought from chemists to help remove these painful and thickened areas, it is always advisable to visit a podiatrist to keep the skin in good condition.

Toenails

As we age, toenails change and grow more slowly and may become dull, brittle, yellowed and opaque. Ingrown toenails also become more common, and conditions such as eczema can result in thicker nails. Fungal infections of the nails account for about half of all nail disorders. These infections are often ignored for long periods, making them harder to treat.



Top tips

- *Regularly check the heel for hard skin and cracks or fissures — these can be very painful and become a focus for infection.*
- *Check for hard skin and corns that often develop under or between the metatarsal head area of the ball of the foot.*
- *Pressure ulcers are always a risk in those with diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis.*
- *Always wear footwear when visiting the toilet at night.*

If you have any concerns about the condition of your feet, visit a podiatrist. Your local Leg Club can also examine and assess your feet so that a correct diagnosis can be obtained and any necessary referral(s) made. Leg Clubs often have visiting podiatrists or representatives from Age Concern, who care for feet and nails and advise on how to avoid conditions developing or worsening. Leg Clubs also provide ongoing care following diagnosis.

To find your nearest Leg Club (no appointment needed), visit: www.legclub.org/about-leg-clubs or ring: **01473 749565**.