

Diabetes Foot Care Referral Process Guidelines

Risk score: determined by the highest risk score that is assessed in any category during the foot screening

All patients, regardless of risk score, should be counselled on healthy diet and exercise and treated to achieve and maintain target A1C, BP, cholesterol, and tobacco cessation. Patients who are exposed to tobacco should be encouraged to contact AlbertaQuits.ca

LOW RISK

Normal foot exam

- Provide **Low Risk** Information
- Inform where to access local resources

Foot Care Management and follow up by:

- Primary Care Provider

(Care by a foot specialist is not required for the Low Risk Diabetes Foot)

Foot Assessment
Annually

MODERATE RISK

Skin, nail, anatomical or sensory abnormality with no skin breakdown/ulcer

- Provide **Moderate Risk** Information
- Inform where to access local resources

Referral to family physician (FP) or nurse practitioner (NP) **within 1 month** for management or referral to High Risk Foot Team* if appropriate

Findings

Skin/nail abnormalities

Structural Deformities or Inadequate/Inappropriate footwear

Vascular concerns

Loss of protective sensation (LOPS)

Neuropathic pain

Foot Specialist

*Foot care provider***

*Occupational therapist (OT)
Orthotist
Podiatrist*

FP/NP/Vascular assessment

*Diabetes and foot care education
Orthotist
Podiatrist*

FP/NP

Foot Screen Assessment
Every 4 to 6 months
(or as assessed by above)

HIGH RISK

Skin breakdown/ulcer, impaired circulation with no signs of infection or cellulitis

- Provide **High Risk** Information
- Inform where to access local resources

Refer to High Risk Foot Team* or local team **within 1 to 2 weeks**. Note: all cases of ulcers and structural deformities + pressure require offloading. Air casts, non weight bearing with crutches, etc. may provide interim relief, but patients will need referral to an Orthotist, OT or other specialist in footwear modification.

Findings

Skin (non-infected ulcer/skin breakdown/hemorrhagic callous)

Structural deformity with pressure

Vascular Concerns

Foot Specialist

FP/NP-wound management + offloading

*FP/NP +/- Occupational therapist (OT)
Orthopedic specialist
Podiatric physician + offloading*

FP/NP +/- Vascular surgeon

Foot Screen Assessment
Every 1 to 4 weeks

URGENT

Cellulitis, draining ulcer, acute charcot joint collapse, gangrene, cold white painful foot or part thereof

Contact MD/FP/NP/ER or Urgent Care Services to arrange for **immediate (within 24 hours) assessment and treatment**.
Offload affected area

Findings

*Skin/wound
Infection*

Structural Deformities (red hot painful joint or acute Charcot joint "collapse")

Vascular concerns (gangrene or cold white painful foot/toes)

Pain or inflammation in a previously insensate foot

Foot Specialist

FP/NP +/- Infectious Disease (ID) or ER or Wound Care Specialist

*Orthopedic specialist
Occupational therapist (OT)
Orthotist
Podiatrist
Podiatric physician*

*Vascular surgeon/
Interventional radiologist*

FP/NP or ER

Arrange for follow-up education once stable

CLOSED ULCER (Ulcer in Remission)

After ulcer closure, patients remain at significant risk for recurrence of ulceration. The High Risk Foot Team will follow these patients until appropriate for transition back to primary care for long term follow-up.

*Referral to a High Risk Foot Team, if available in your area, or if there is no High Risk Foot Team, refer patients to local resources for care. You can use this documents as a guide to determine the Foot Specialists in your community and map out what resources are available in your area

** Foot care provider may include podiatric physician, foot care nurse, or other medically trained provider competent in providing skin and nail care. These services may have a fee.