

Living with diabetes

Diabetes and pedicures: Do they go together?

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Whether you feel you have nice feet or not, your feet are an important part of your life. My grandmother used to tell me that my feet were my foundation. As you know, if the foundation cracks or collapses the whole building is in trouble.

I have calloused feet and decided recently it would be nice to try having a pedicure. I had never had one before and now I can say I have had three. With the first pedicure my feet looked great and I enjoyed the experience.

With the second, the manicurist cut the skin on the side of my big toe and it became infected. Being vain and enjoying the looks of having pretty coral painted toenails when I wear my sandals, I tried another pedicure and the manicurist clipped my skin again and drew blood.

If you have diabetes, this is not a good thing. What's a person to do?

At my previous employment as a diabetes educator, we instructed our patients to never get a pedicure. Realistically, I don't know how many people follow this advice.

When you have diabetes, any injury to your feet is a major concern. An injury is an open invitation for an infection. An infection can lead to higher blood sugars and higher blood sugars can interfere with the healing process, which can lead to ulcers and potential amputation. This means you need to take good care of your feet and avoid injury.

Here are some recommendations for individuals who decide to go ahead and have a pedicure. This was taken from an article about pedicures in the "Diabetes Forecast" October 2008 issue.

- **Use good judgment. Be picky about the salon.** Check out several salons and look into sanitation practices and how they clean their tools. At one local salon in our area, you buy your own tools and they are kept in a box with your name.
- **Inspect the foot tub.** Does it get cleaned between clients?
- **Inspect the tools.** Stainless steel instruments are more sanitary than wooden sticks.
- **Don't be afraid to give the nail technician instructions. Let them know you have diabetes.** Water temperature of 90-95 degrees should be safe, avoid razors, no lotion between the toes, and be gentle.
- **If you shave your legs, stop 2 days before the appointment to decrease your chances of bacteria entering nicks or cuts.**