

Foot Care

This leaflet explains about how best to look after your feet and how to monitor for any injuries. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.

Hygiene

- Feet should be washed everyday using mild soap and water.
- Soaking for 15 to 20 minutes can be helpful for those with hard, crusty or scaly skin.
- Using a clean towel, dry feet well (especially between the toes, where moisture can be trapped).
 - Do not use Talc powder as a substitute for drying feet.
- If you suffer from sweaty feet, surgical spirit can be applied using cotton wool between toes, avoiding any cuts or broken skin.

Skin care

- Hard or dry skin can be filed gently with an emery board, foot file or pumice. This should be done before washing on dry skin.
 - This works well against painful corns and prevents them from building up.
 - Should be done regularly.
- Moisturise any areas of dry skin, but not in between toes. Aim to do this once or twice daily, depending on your skin.

- Moisturising between toes increases the risk of the skin breaking and getting infected.
- For very dry skin, use a moisturising dedicated foot cream, rather than a body cream. Very dry skin is at risk of cracking.

Nail care

- Cut your nails following the shape of the toe.
- Try not to cut the nail in one go and use a gradual nipping action instead.
- Use a nail file on any rough edges.
- Also use the file against the nail to keep it thin, if thickened.
- Avoid cutting nails too short – ensure some of the free white edge is still showing.
- Do not dig down the sides of nails.
- Avoid cutting the corners of the nail. This spiking of the nail can lead to an ingrown toenail.
- If you are unable to maintain your toenails yourself, it is important that you seek help with this. This can be a family member, carer or dedicated chiropodist / podiatrist.

Inspecting your feet

- Ensure a doctor, nurse or chiropodist / podiatrist checks your feet at least once a year.
- Take a few minutes to inspect your feet every day for redness, cuts or injuries.
- Look for any signs of infection which can include:
 - Flaky or peeling skin
 - Cracked or split skin between toes
 - Discharge or other fluid.

- Report any injuries to your feet (no matter how small) to your doctor, nurse or chiropodist / podiatrist if they fail to improve within three days or before if they start to deteriorate.

Minor cuts and blisters

- Do not burst any blisters.
- Cover them with a clean, dry dressing and check daily.
- Clean any cuts and protect using plasters or other appropriate dressings.
- If the area becomes red, inflamed or has any pustular discharge, seek medical attention immediately.
- If you are prone to blisters and intend to do a lot of walking, try rubbing surgical spirit over the skin for a few weeks beforehand to toughen it.
Avoid any areas of broken or damaged skin.

Corns and callus

- Thick hard skin is just that: an area of skin that is thicker than usual and has become hard as a result. It is often yellowish in colour and can affect many parts of the foot such as the ball of the foot, the heel and the toes.
- Avoid corn acids or medicated corn dressings, as these can cause skin breakage, resulting in an infection.

Socks, stockings and tights

- Always ensure that any socks, stockings or tights fit well and are not too tight. This can disrupt blood flow to the feet.

Footwear

- Make sure your footwear meets your requirements.
- Ankle support can be beneficial in providing more stability.
- Ensure that shoes are the right size, comfortable and fit properly. If blisters arise, it may be due to poorly fitting shoes.
- NEVER walk bare footed, especially on holiday and not at home.

Things to avoid

- Avoid moisturising in between toes.
- Talc is not a substitute for not drying feet
- Avoid cutting nails too short – ensure some of the free white edge is still showing.
- Avoid cutting the corners of the nail. This spiking of the nail can lead to an ingrown toenail.
- Do not dig down the sides of nails.
- Do not burst blisters
- Avoid corn acids or medicated corn dressings, as these can cause skin breakage, resulting in an infection.
- NEVER walk bare footed, especially on holiday.

Useful sources of information

The Royal College of Podiatry has an abundance of information on foot hygiene, see [Royal College of Podiatry homepage \(rcpod.org.uk\)](http://rcpod.org.uk) .

Also see The Legs Matter coalition:

[Patient & healthcare professional: help & information sources for legs & feet \(legsmatter.org\)](http://legsmatter.org)

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

