

# Everything you need to know about dressing your wound

Wound dressings play a large part in the care of diabetes-related foot ulcers, helping to prevent infection and further damage, while encouraging healing. However, not all dressings are the same and the dressing you wear should be selected for your wound type.



**T**reatment for your diabetes-related foot ulcer will involve using wound dressings while healing takes place.

The dressing you use will have several functions:

- It will provide the wound with the best conditions for wound healing to take place, such as warmth and moisture
- It will protect the wound from micro-organisms in the environment, and protect it from further damage and

trauma, for example, it may prevent your shoes from rubbing against your wound

- It will absorb any fluid or discharge from the wound and hold it within the dressing away from the wound and skin
- Some dressings can also help to clean the wound by helping to gently lift off any dead tissue or debris that may be present
- Some dressings can help reduce pain in the wound or during dressing changes.

- Some dressings can have antimicrobial properties to help fight wound infection.

## Dressing selection

Different wound dressings are needed depending on the condition of your wound and your symptoms, such as pain or a large volume of fluid. For this reason, there is no single dressing to suit all wounds. As the condition of your wound changes, you may also need to change the type of dressing you use.

Your healthcare professional will have chosen a dressing based on an assessment of your wound and so it is best to keep using this choice. This is because some dressings are not appropriate for certain types of diabetes-related foot ulcers. For example, they may donate too much moisture to the wound, causing it to enlarge and increasing the risk of infection. Similarly, some wound dressings are not designed for the foot, and so they may be difficult to apply to toes, for example, or not be suitable for use underneath the foot.

If you feel that your dressing is causing you harm, or have any problem with it, speak to your healthcare professional about the different options available.

## Tips for dressing changes

Try not to disturb the dressing too much as you risk introducing bacteria, which may result in infection. However, you must act if it becomes soggy or dirty. If you have been shown how to change your own dressing, make sure you have the correct dressings to hand.

Dressings should be gentle on the skin but seal off the wound from the outside world and stay securely in place. Silicone-based dressings are frequently used as they minimise pain and damage to the wound and skin at dressing change.

If you are finding that your wound dressing is leaking frequently, it may be that you need a different type of dressing. A more absorbent dressing that holds more wound fluid by spreading it over a wider surface area may help as it is able to stay in place longer. Remember though that while it is important that the wound is moist, it must not get wet. When too much wound fluid is allowed to sit in contact with the wound or surrounding skin, it can cause problems such as the wound becoming bigger or not healing and the skin becoming soggy and macerated. For this reason, do not get your dressing wet when washing. A dressing protector will allow you to have a bath or shower safely while keeping your dressing dry.

At dressing change, keep a close look out for any danger signs, such as:

- Pain or throbbing in your feet
- New signs of redness, inflammation, swelling, heat or smell from your foot
- Increase in discharge
- Flu-like symptoms or a rash
- Body temperature above 38.3°C (101°F) or below 36°C (96°F).

If you have any concerns or problems with your feet or ulcer, you must contact a healthcare professional as soon as possible. 