



**Leicester City Clinical Commissioning Group  
West Leicestershire Clinical Commissioning Group  
East Leicestershire and Rutland Clinical Commissioning Group**

Dear Patient

**Podiatry Service - Nail Cutting**

We have been reviewing the NHS podiatry service in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and have found a growing number of patients are being referred to the service for nail cutting who have normal nails and no risk of developing further health complications.

While we recognise that many people who use the service for this reason do so because they may struggle to cut their own nails, across the NHS we are facing huge financial challenges and so we have a duty to use these limited funds wisely.

This additional demand is putting pressure on the service and preventing its staff from delivering a good quality, efficient and effective service for those patients that have a medical need.

Going forwards we need to ensure the podiatry services are being used by those patients who have a medical need and so the podiatry service will no longer be able to accept patients for nail cutting who are not at risk from developing further health complications or who need monitoring for these.

If you are already attending the service for nail cutting and are classed as having normal nails then, at your next appointment, you will be given advice on self-care and how to access private care. The podiatry service is happy to show your carers or family members how to safely care for your nails. You will then be discharged from the service.

The podiatry service will continue to treat your nails if you have a recognised health need or there are significant risk factors that could put you in danger if you were to self-care.

If you are a high risk diabetic patient or have been diagnosed with severe ischaemia the podiatry service will continue to provide nail care to you are more vulnerable to infection.

If you are a diabetic patient and you are not classed as high risk but you notice any problems whilst self-caring, for example wounds or infections, the podiatry service provides drop in emergency clinics across the city and county. These clinics provide quick access to the service to enable a speedy recovery. The service will also review your needs and risk status and act accordingly. The booking office number for drop in clinics is 0116 225 5118, lines are open 9am to 4pm.

We appreciate that any change to services can be unsettling and the podiatry staff will provide all patients that are discharged with information and advice on how to look after their own feet and nails.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JB', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and a smaller 'B'.

Jim Bosworth  
Associate Director of Commissioning & Contracting

## **Advice for self-care**

### **WHAT IF I AM NOT ELIGIBLE FOR TREATMENT?**

If you are assessed as not being eligible for NHS Podiatry services, we would still encourage you to look after your feet yourself – you may find the information in this booklet useful. If you cannot reach your feet or use scissors or clippers because of a problem with your hands, basic foot care could be provided by a relative or carer. We can also provide you with details of private services that can help.

### **SELF CARE GUIDELINES**

Proper foot care is essential and should be as much a part of our daily routine as brushing our teeth.

Foot care is part of basic personal care. At its simplest this involves personal foot hygiene, the cutting and filing of nails and appropriate skin care.

### **CARE OF YOUR SKIN**

Foot hygiene is important.

- Wash feet daily with mild soap and warm water
- Dry carefully, not forgetting the skin between the toes
- Avoid using talcum powder as it may become crusted between the toes and collect around the nails

### **SKIN PROBLEMS**

#### **DRY SKIN**

- If your skin is dry, apply a moisturiser on a daily basis. This will prevent skin becoming susceptible to splitting or tearing which could create a point of entry for infection.
- Do not apply moisturisers between your toes, as this may encourage Athlete's Foot. Avoid wearing backless shoes as these tend to encourage dry skin to form around heels.
- Avoid soaking feet for long periods as this can encourage dry skin.

#### **MOIST/SWEATY SKIN**

- Sweaty feet are more prone to infection.
- Soggy, white skin between your toes could be due to not drying the areas properly after bathing or the presence of sweat/moisture which cannot evaporate, perhaps due to overlapping or hammered toes. Apply astringents such as surgical spirit on a daily basis.
- Red, itchy, peeling skin (sometimes soggy, white skin) between your toes could be due to a fungal infection (Athlete's Foot). Apply an anti-fungal spray or cream, for two weeks after the symptoms have cleared and then apply surgical spirit daily to prevent its re-occurrence. Your Pharmacist will be able to advise you about suitable products.
- Wear natural cotton or wool socks and avoid synthetic fibres. - Wear shoes with leather uppers or sandals in the summer.

#### **BLISTERS**

- Do not pop the blister.

- Cover it with a clean, dry dressing.

### **CARE OF YOUR NAILS**

- Make sure you have good light and take your time.
- Use nail clippers.
- When cutting your nails follow the shape of your toe (this is more or less straight across).
- Always leave a small amount of white nail.
- As long as the toenails are shorter than the tip of the toe, the nail cut is adequate
- Do not cut down the sides, this may cause, an 'in-growing' toenail by leaving a nail spike.
- File the nails to remove any rough edges and sharp points.
- It may be easier to cut nails after a bath.
- If there are any problems with your eyesight, then regular filing a couple of times a week will keep nails in good condition.
- You do not need to cut or file all of your nails at the same time if you struggle to reach. You can do them one at a time over the course of a few days.

### **NAIL PROBLEMS**

- In-growing, thickened and curved nails require attention by a podiatrist.

### **INGROWING NAILS**

- This is where part of the nail has grown into the skin and penetrates the flesh that surrounds the nail.
- It can occur on any toenail, but commonly on the big toe.
- If not treated, the toe becomes increasingly painful and some bleeding or pus may be observed around or under the nail. The toe may look red, shiny and swollen.

#### **Common causes:**

- Incorrect nail cutting, picking, biting and tearing at nails.
- Trauma caused by e.g. ill-fitting shoes.
- Can be a problem occurring in families.

### **INFECTION**

- If there is infection, bathe your foot daily in warm salt water for five minutes and cover with a clean or sterile dressing.
- If the infection does not respond to this, contact your GP's surgery to see if antibiotics may be appropriate.
- If you have a fungal foot infection, such as Athlete's Foot, apply an anti-fungal spray or cream for two weeks after the symptoms have cleared and then apply surgical spirit daily to prevent its re-occurrence. Your pharmacist will be able to advise you about suitable products.

### **INVOLUTED NAILS**

These are nails with a much greater curve than usual, which can be so severe that the nail pinches the flesh, causing pain or discomfort.

Common causes:

- Incorrect nail cutting and ill-fitting shoes.
- Injury to toe nail area.
- Can be a problem occurring in families.

### **THICKENED NAILS**

These are nails which are thicker than normal; they may cause discomfort.

- Use a large file to thin the nail down.

Common causes:

- Fungal nail infections.
- Injury to toe nail area.
- Trauma caused by e.g. ill-fitting shoes. BASIC

### **FOOTWEAR GUIDELINES: HOSIERY**

Socks should be changed daily to keep feet fresh and comfortable. Ensure they fit correctly and are not too tight.

A mixture of natural fibres (e.g. wool, cotton) and synthetic substances (e.g. nylon), is recommended as the synthetic material can help to keep the foot dry. Synthetic fibres let moisture pass through to an absorbent surface on the other side, e.g. leather shoe upper. This process, known as wicking, keeps the foot dry but will not take place if shoes are made of, or lined with synthetic material. 100% natural fibre hosiery is not recommended as natural fibres absorb moisture and remain damp. Socks and stockings that are too small restrict the circulation to the foot and can do just as much damage to the toes as shoes that do not fit.

### **SHOES: POINTS TO LOOK FOR IN AN IDEAL SHOE**

Overall fit:

- The shoe should be the correct length, width and depth for your foot. There should be half an inch between the end of your longest toe and your shoe. - Round and deep toe box to prevent cramping the toes.
- Curved back, for close fit around the heel.
- Ideally heels should be broad, to allow for stability, and no more than 4cm/1.5 inches high.
- Shaped shoe upper, high enough up the instep for adequate fastening, shoes with laces and at least three eyelets or straps with buckles or Velcro fasteners may be best. Ideal materials:
- The upper should be soft and ideally made of leather.
- The shoe should have a thick, lightweight, flexible rubber sole.

Condition:

- No rough seams on the inner side of the shoe.
- Overall, shoes should be in a good state of repair.

### **SHOES TO AVOID**

- "Slip on" style or Court shoes. These are kept on by curling the toes or because they are too small.
- Shoes with a pointed toe box, which squashes your toes together.

- High heels causing your foot to be pushed to the end of the shoe and crushing your toes.
- Shoes made of plastic, which will cause sweating.
- Shoes which have, thin, hard, inflexible soles. These will not cushion your feet properly and will restrict normal foot function.

### **BUYING SHOES**

- If possible shop at a store with appropriately trained staff to advise you.
- Have your feet measured.
- Try the shoes on with any inserts or insoles you are likely to use and wear the socks or stockings you anticipate wearing most often with them. Try on both shoes and fit your longest foot.
- If your feet tend to swell, shop for shoes at the end of the day when they have swollen to their maximum.
- Shoes should not require 'breaking in'. Price does not determine good fit. Expensive shoes can cause just as much harm to feet as cheap ones. If you are not sure whether the shoes will fit:
  - Whilst standing, get somebody to draw around your foot onto a piece of cardboard
  - Take a pair of scissors and carefully cut out the shape of your foot.
  - Place this cut-out in the shoe.
  - If the edges curl, then your shoe is not fitting correctly.
  - Take this cut-out with you as a useful guide when buying shoes.

### **WHEN TO SEEK FURTHER ADVICE OR ATTENTION**

Regular foot inspections by yourself/relative/carer are important, for the early identification of foot problems, for example:

- Unusual colour or temperature changes of the skin
- Pressure marks
- Breaks in skin
- Slow healing cuts or abrasions
- Burns

All of these problems may potentially put your feet at risk of skin breakdown or ulceration. They require prompt attention and/or advice from health professionals, e.g. GP, podiatrist or pharmacist.

A list of podiatrists may be found in the Yellow Pages. If you do seek private treatment then please ensure that the practitioner is Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) registered.

Seek advice as quickly as possible, particularly if you are a person with medical problems such as diabetes or poor circulation.