What Are Diabetic Socks and How Can They Help?

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Do You Really Need Special Socks for Diabetes?

If you walk into any pharmacy, you'll probably see an array of socks labeled "diabetic socks" near the diabetes blood sugar testing equipment and glucose tablet. A quick Google search will bring up various online retailers selling thousands of different types of diabetic socks. There are even entire websites devoted to the sale of these types of socks.

If you have type 1 or type 2 diabetes, you may wonder, "Do I *need* diabetic socks? What do diabetic socks do? And why wear diabetic socks?"

Diabetic Socks Versus Regular Socks

Generally, diabetic socks have no prominent seams that may cause blisters, they keep the feet warm, have non-elastic cuffs, and allow the feet to breathe.

The average sock is made from 100 percent cotton or wool. Diabetic socks, however, are typically made a combination of cotton, nylon, acrylic, and elastic fibers, which allows the sock to promote circulation while keeping the foot warm and still allowing the foot to breathe.

The problem with diabetic socks? There are no strict guidelines regarding their labeling, meaning you may pick up a so-called diabetic sock and it may not have these components.

When searching for diabetic socks, it is important to inspect the socks for seams, proper material and to ensure that the cuff will not be too tight. Keep in mind that just because a sock is labeled as "diabetic" doesn't mean it will be of any benefit to you — and socks that do not have the "diabetic" label may also pass the test.

The Benefits of Wearing Diabetic Socks

Diabetic socks can help people with diabetes by:

- Keep feet dry so that excess moisture doesn't develop fungal infections.
- Some socks contain anti-microbial features which help prevent fungal and bacteria growth.
- The socks can help blisters, ulcers or cuts heal faster.
- Keep your feet warm while they encouraging blood circulation, and in turn, reduces pressure.
- Regular socks contain thick seams, but diabetic socks are typically seamless and this can help lessen irritation and pain.

Do I Need Diabetic Socks?

Not everyone needs to wear diabetic socks.

If your doctor has told you your diabetes is under adequate control with no complications, you probably do not need to buy special socks. However, if your blood sugars have been running high, your A1C is elevated, you have complications from your diabetes (even if your blood sugars are running in a normal range) and/or your doctor has recommended that you wear these special socks, you should start searching.

Also, if you're prone to foot problems or infections, neuropathy, decreased sensation or poor circulation, then wearing a pair of these socks could actually be beneficial. Many types of

Diabetic Foot Care

Even more important than diabetic socks is diabetes foot care in general.

Diabetes can cause damage to the nerves and blood vessels to the extremities; this can cause foot problems such as peripheral neuropathy and problems with circulation. In fact, the combination of the two can lead to non-healing ulcers, which can eventually lead to amputations.

Therefore, it is crucial to inspect the feet daily, ensure that your doctor is monitoring your feet and notifying your doctor right away if there are any concerns.

Some key points about foot care:

- **Check your feet daily.** Look at the entire foot — the top, bottom, and in between toes. Check for anything that isn’t supposed to be there, such as corns, calluses, blisters, and cuts.
- **Wear shoes that fit properly.** Shoes that are too big or too small can cause blisters. Avoid shoes with open toes, such as flip-flops. The best shoes have closed toes and heels, an outer sole that has stiff material, with the inside being of a soft material. You can also purchase diabetic shoes at most shoe stores too.
- **Don’t use a heating pad on your feet.** If you have neuropathy, it may be difficult to sense the temperature. If you have a difficult time sensing the temperature, this can cause burns.
- **Notify your doctor of anything concerning.** This includes sores or wounds to the feet, as they may be slow to heal without proper attention, ingrown toenails, increasing numbness, redness, blackening of the skin, bunions, or hammertoes.

If you have any concerns about these types of socks, it is best to discuss it with your physician.