

# Blisters

## Information & advice for self-care

**Note:** If you are diabetic or are on immunosuppressant medication(s) and develop a blister, please report this to your GP without delay, or podiatrist if you are an existing patient.

### What are blisters and what causes them?

Blisters are painful, fluid-filled lesions produced by friction and pressure. They can be caused by the following:

- Ill-fitting footwear
- Stiff shoes
- Wrinkled socks against the skin
- Excessive moisture
- Foot deformities

### Are they serious?

Blisters can become a more serious concern if you have diabetes as they may not heal so easily. Please see your podiatrist for further advice.

### What are the treatments?

It is important to act immediately if you feel any friction or discomfort, as blisters can form very quickly. Stop walking or running and examine your feet and if nothing has developed, consider applying some material or padding to cushion the area, or even a breathable waterproof plaster.

If a blister does occur, do not pop it. Cut a hole in a piece of foam or felt to form a doughnut over the blister. Tape the foam or felt in place or cover with a soft gel-type dressing.

Treat an open blister with mild soap and water, apply an antiseptic ointment and cover with a protective soft gel dressing to prevent infection and speed up the healing process.

Most foot blisters last between three and seven days and will normally clear up if further excessive friction is avoided.

### How can I prevent them?

As blisters are the result of friction, there are a number of simple techniques that can prevent your walking, running or social activity being ruined by a blister:

- Keep your feet dry and your toenails trimmed
- Always wear socks of the right size as a cushion between your feet and footwear and change your socks daily
- Wear comfortable, good fitting footwear, especially on long walks or runs
- For very sweaty feet, use products that help control excessive moisture
- Immediately remove any foreign bodies that accumulate in socks and boots
- Ensure the tongue and laces of your boots are arranged correctly and evenly
- Check your feet regularly for any sign of rubbing and tenderness.



When buying socks, choose socks made of fibres with good 'wicking' properties. Alternatively, look for special 'dual layer' socks where the inner layer moves with the foot, and the outer layer with the shoe - these help eliminate friction at the skin surface.

### When should I see an NHS podiatrist?

If you have any foot health concerns and think this may potentially lead to a complication, please consider discussing a podiatry referral with your GP.

If your foot becomes red, hot or swollen with new pain, with or without a wound, please ask your GP to refer you to the Podiatry Service.

### **Compliments, concerns or complaints**

PALS may be the best starting point if you have a question or concern. If you would like to find an NHS dentist, know where your nearest doctor is or talk through a problem you have had with a service, you can contact the PALS service.

**Tel:** 01502 445447

**Email:** [ECCH.patientliaison@nhs.net](mailto:ECCH.patientliaison@nhs.net)

#### **Or write to:**

PALS, East Coast Community Healthcare,  
Hamilton House, Battery Green Road,  
Lowestoft, NR32 1DE

This content was produced by the College of Podiatry. Find out more:

<https://cop.org.uk/common-foot-problems>



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