

# Diabetes and amputation – what are the risks?

NHS England states that there are around 3.8million people in the UK diagnosed with diabetes, a condition which – if not properly treated – is one of the leading causes of lower-limb loss.

Unlike traumatic amputations, such as those following car accidents, amputations for those with diabetes are largely the result of improper care in managing the condition and a failure to catch complications early.

According to Diabetes UK, of the 6,000 diabetes-related amputations which take place in England each year, 80% are preventable.

## What should I look out for?

### Signs and symptoms to discuss with your doctor or podiatrist

People with diabetes should attend regular foot examinations with a doctor or podiatrist as well as undergo an annual foot examination.

Symptoms or changes to be alert to include:

- Redness or irritation – are there any signs of infection or wounds which won't heal?
- Circulation – are your feet cold suggesting a poor blood supply?
- Sensation – are you suffering from numbness?

If you have concerns about your treatment, speak to your doctor about a referral or access to a second opinion immediately. Early diagnosis of diabetes-linked health complications can mean the difference between saving both limbs AND lives.

Saving limbs, saving lives.

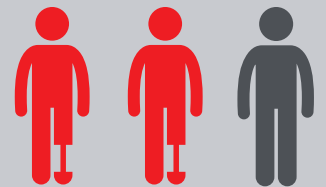
Diabetes – the facts

**3.8 million**

people in the UK have been diagnosed with diabetes, a figure which is increasing by 5% per year



Diabetics are **20** times more at risk of an amputation than the rest of the population



Treatment targets are not being met for two thirds of patients



**120** diabetic people undergo an amputation in England each week  
**80%** of which are avoidable

Early diagnosis is key to reducing the risk of amputation – comprehensive foot care programmes reduce the risk by between

**45% – 85%**



## Don't become a statistic

**Case study 1.** Our client was a known diabetic who was admitted to hospital. On discharge, it was noted that he had developed a small pressure sore to his heel. It was not managed well, his venous system was not checked and this resulted in an amputation below the knee.

**Case study 2.** Our client was a known diabetic who developed a small sore to her foot. She was in hospital for other reasons and the staff noted blood from the sore but failed to dress or treat it. By the time she was seen by the podiatrist it was too late and whilst appropriate treatment was then provided, an amputation was ultimately unavoidable.

## Frequently asked questions

### I am diabetic and have recently had an amputation, how can I find out if I have a claim?

You should speak to a specialist clinical negligence solicitor who will be able to advise you if there is the basis of a claim. You may be advised to make a complaint about the treatment you received that resulted in an amputation to assist in assessing the potential claim.

### What are the time limits for making a claim?

The time limits are typically three years from the date you knew – or had a reasonable chance of knowing – that you were being harmed by your medical treatment.

### Do I need to wait until after my amputation to start a legal claim?

No. If you have concerns about the care you are receiving you should raise this with your healthcare provider immediately and ask for a referral. If you think that your forthcoming amputation is the result of clinical negligence, you can seek legal advice before the operation, as well as after it.

### I paid for private treatment, can I still make a claim?

You are entitled to proper medical care. If the care you received is found to have fallen below the required standards resulting in harm or injury to you, then you may have a case – regardless of whether the care came from the NHS or privately.

### How do I choose the right solicitor?

You should choose a specialist solicitor who has experience both in the fields of clinical negligence and amputations. There are various bodies which monitor and quality control solicitors who can help you to choose a reputable firm.

The Limbless Association has a panel of legal firms which meet its criteria for running amputation claims, of which Thompsons is proud to be a member.

Thompsons also holds panel membership with Action Against Medical Accidents (AvMA), the Law Society's Clinical Negligence Accreditation Scheme and has been described by The Legal 500 as a 'first rate outfit'.

## Useful contacts & sources of information

### Diabetes UK

0345 123 2399  
[www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk)  
[info@diabetes.org.uk](mailto:info@diabetes.org.uk)

### The Limbless Association

0800 644 0185  
The Limb Loss Legal Panel  
0800 644 0186  
[www.limbless-association.org](http://www.limbless-association.org)  
[enquiries@limbless-association.org](mailto:enquiries@limbless-association.org)

### NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Diabetes](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Diabetes)

### Thompsons Solicitors

0800 140 4502  
[www.thompsonsmedicalnegligence.co.uk](http://www.thompsonsmedicalnegligence.co.uk)