It is important to keep the feet clean. If possible wash the feet daily in warm water with mild soap and rinse thoroughly. Drying between the toes may be difficult if they are close together, so slide a piece of gauze between the toes to dry them. Do not pull the toes apart.

If the skin is dry apply, moisturising cream daily, avoiding between the toes.

Cut and/or file the nails as recommended by your podiatrist.

Do not attempt to remove hard skin or corns yourself. Never use over-the-counter corn remedies. They are not recommended as they can damage the skin and create ulcers. Your podiatrist will provide treatment and advice where necessary.

If your feet are cold, wear socks. Never sit with your feet in front of the fire to warm them up. Always remove hot water bottles or heating pads from your bed before getting in.

If you discover any problems with your feet, contact your Podiatry Department or GP immediately. If they are not available, go to your nearest accident and emergency department. Remember, any delay in getting advice or treatment when you have a problem can lead to more serious problems.

Individual advice

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Equality Statement

At South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust we are fully committed to equality and diversity, both as an employer and as a service provider. We have a policy statement in our Equality Strategy that clearly outlines our commitment to equality for service users, patients and staff:

You and your family have the right to be treated fairly and be routinely involved in decisions about your treatment and care. You can expect to be treated with dignity and respect. You will not be discriminated against on any grounds including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

You have a responsibility to treat other service users, patients and our staff with dignity and respect.

Our information for patients can also be made available in other languages, Braille, audio tape, disc or in large print.

PALS

We offer a Patient Advice Liaison Service (PALS). This is a confidential service for families to help with any questions or concerns about local health services. You can contact the service by the direct telephone line on 01926 600 054 by email: Pals@swft.nhs.uk or by calling in person to the PALS Office which is located in the Lakin Road Entrance of Warwick Hospital.
Rheumatological conditions can affect your feet by:

- Causing pain due to flare up in the joints/bursa/ muscles and tendons.
- Causing damage to joints/tendons
- Causing deformity to the foot shape, and this interferes with the way the foot works.
- Affecting the feeling in your feet if the nerves become trapped or damaged.
- Causing open sores to develop.

The medication you are taking for this condition can also affect your feet by:

- Making the skin thin and therefore more easily damaged/easy to damage.
- Slowing healing of wounds
- Reducing the body's ability to fight infection. Signs of infection may not be obvious and infection can spread quicker and more easily.
- Causing swelling of the feet, making footwear tight and likely to rub.

Due to your feet being high risk, it is important to take extra care of them. We recommend that you have regular treatment by a podiatrist.

By following the advice and information on this leaflet, you can minimise the risks and also take care of your feet between podiatry visits.

If you smoke, you are strongly advised to stop as it can cause serious complications and make your existing symptoms worse.

Keep within recommended limits when drinking alcohol. You can discuss/get further advice on this from your GP, rheumatology specialist nurse or podiatrist.

Exercise can ease your symptoms and help you remain independent. Also keeping to a healthy weight will ease the pressure on your feet.

Danger Signs

If you detect any of the following it is important to seek medical advice as soon as possible. Make an urgent appointment with your GP, rheumatology specialist nurse or podiatrist. The danger signs are:

- An open wound/sore
- Redness and/or swelling
- New or different pain.

Actions

Check your feet daily for any change in colour such as redness, bruising, with signs of damage such as blisters, breaks in the skin, pain, swelling, heat, change in shape or loss of movement. If you cannot do this yourself, ask your partner or carer to help you.

Cover any breaks in the skin or blisters with a sterile dressing. Do not burst the blisters. If an infection is suspected, it may require stopping/altering medication you take for your rheumatological condition. Contact your GP, rheumatology specialist nurse or podiatrist department immediately.

Good supportive footwear is essential to improve pain and discomfort in the feet. It should be wide and deep enough to allow for any deformity and also insoles if required. The podiatrist can give you advice on the shoes you already own and on buying new shoes. They may recommend having your feet measured for special shoes on prescription.

Check your shoes before putting them on to make sure that no sharp objects have pierced the sole (such as a pin or nail) or fallen into the shoes, e.g. small stones which could damage your feet.

Avoid walking barefoot to avoid stubbing toes or standing on sharp objects.

Socks, stockings or tights should be changed daily. Avoid bulky seams which may rub toes and elasticated tops.