



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.