

YOUR PODIATRY CONSULTATION

WHAT IS A PODIATRIST?

A podiatrist (or chiropodist as they were more commonly known) is a clinician that is degree-educated and specifically trained to assess, diagnose and treat disorders of the foot and lower limb. Commonly associated with removing corns or cutting toenails, the modern podiatrist is also qualified to carry out biomechanical assessments, perform nail surgery under local anaesthesia, manufacture and issue orthotics, administer dermatological treatments, or supply appropriate medication.

Podiatry forms a central role in the healthcare provision for the ever-increasing diabetic population, and podiatrists are integral in helping prevent foot ulceration, or successfully treating diabetes-related wounds should they develop. The term 'podiatrist' or 'chiropodist' are protected titles and every clinician using these titles has to be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT FROM AN ASSESSMENT?

This depends on the reason for your visit. The podiatrist will ask you a number of questions relating to your complaint. They will need to get an idea of your general health so they will always ask you about any medication you may be taking.

If you are attending for muscle or joint pain the podiatrist will ask a number of questions relating to the problem and will palpate (touch) areas of your feet or legs to aid accurate diagnosis. They may also ask you to walk a short distance within the clinic so they can assess your lower limb function, and issue insoles if they deem it appropriate. If you are diabetic the podiatrist will carry out certain tests and ask specific questions in relation to the quality of the blood supply and nerve sensation in your feet.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT FROM MY TREATMENT?

A critical factor in determining whether podiatry treatment is successful is the contribution from the patient. Your podiatrist may offer advice on footwear, exercises, stretching, or the use of emollients, for example, but any treatment plan is a partnership between the clinician and the patient. Generally, more co-operation results in more positive outcomes.

In cases where the podiatrist is unsure as to the cause of your complaint they may arrange for medical scanning or imaging of your foot or leg to aid accurate diagnosis. On occasion, the podiatrist may not be able to help you directly as your complaint falls outside their scope of practice - if you have a suspicious-looking skin lesion, for example, they will arrange an urgent referral to a dermatologist.

HOW OFTEN DO I NEED TO VISIT?

Again, this is dependent on your individual problem and your podiatrist will advise you of this during your assessment. Podiatry in the modern NHS is focused on patient education, empowerment and self-help.

Unfortunately, the service is unable to provide ongoing nail-cutting for those without medical need. If you're diabetic, however, or have a condition that puts your feet at risk, you may be seen on a regular basis.

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about the problem with your foot. This leaflet is not a substitute for professional medical advice and should be used in conjunction with verbal information and treatment given.