

Guidelines on Provision of Basic Foot Care by Nurses

Re-endorsed by Annual Conference 2017

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Australian Podiatry Association's (NSW) *Guidelines for the Provision of basic foot care by providers other than registered podiatrists*.

Basic foot care is the routine care of normal skin and nails of the feet. It includes cleaning of feet, cutting and filing of non-pathological toenails and application of moisturisers.

The provision of basic foot care is a normal activity of daily living, essential to the maintenance of healthy, functioning feet. There will be occasions when individuals, due to acquired illness or physical limitations, will be restricted in their ability to fulfil functions normal to their daily life, including basic foot care. All nurses have a professional responsibility when providing assistance with activities of daily living to include attention to a person's feet.

It is important that foot care services offered to the community meet both legislative and other prescribed requirements to ensure a high standard of safe, quality care is delivered to the public. The *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* permits the provision of basic foot care by health practitioners regulated under this Act.

All providers of basic foot care must ensure that they work within the scope of their respective qualifications, training and experience.

There is a clear boundary between the provision of basic foot care and the practice of podiatry. While podiatrists may offer basic foot care and podiatry services, nurses are generally involved in the provision of basic foot care. Registered nurses, enrolled nurses and assistants in nursing may provide basic foot care where they are employed by a hospital, nursing home/aged care facility or community health centre and provide the care as part of their normal duties in that employment. In accordance with the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009*, only registered nurses may, in the course of providing a foot care service, provide treatment to a person who has a medical condition causing inadequate blood circulation to their feet or peripheral neuropathy affecting their feet.

Policies and protocols consistent with the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* should be developed at the local level in consultation with podiatrists nominated by the Australian Podiatry Association (NSW). These policies and protocols should be endorsed in writing by the employing facility and address the normal nursing process of assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation, as well as mechanisms for referral to a podiatrist or a medical practitioner if any abnormalities are detected.

All care given should be appropriately documented. Basic foot care must also be provided within the requirements of infection control practice and legislation. Regular in-service education in basic foot care should be provided by the employing facility.

