



NEW SOUTH WALES NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION
AUSTRALIAN NURSING AND MIDWIFERY FEDERATION NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH



GUIDELINES ON PROVISION OF BASIC FOOT CARE BY NURSES

Re-Endorsed by Annual Conference 2021

NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association
50 O'Dea Avenue Waterloo NSW 2017

P 02 8595 1234 (metro) • 1300 367 962 (regional)

www.nswnma.asn.au

Guidelines on Provision of Basic Foot Care by Nurses

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. If a person has diabetes, they have a much higher risk of foot complications. Assessments should be undertaken by a registered nurse and referred to a podiatrist where appropriate¹.

In the provision of foot care, and that which is high risk, patient management should be provided by a co-located multidisciplinary team with expertise in the management of diabetic foot disease including a senior podiatrist, nurse, and a senior physician. A podiatrist should be available as a central point of contact. Patient care is co-coordinated with all relevant members of the clinical team contributing to the management plan and treatment of the patient. The patient/client is involved in development of any care plan in a patient/client centric care plan approach².

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 on basic foot care should be provided by the employing facility.

NOTE:

1. Australian Government. Department of Veteran Affairs 2020. [Basic Foot Care: A resource reference for Personal Care Workers](#). Australian Government.2.
2. Agency for Clinical Innovation 2014. [Standards for High Risk Foot Services \(HRFS\) in NSW](#). NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation.

REFERENCES:

1. <https://www.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/providers/cn/dva-pcv-resource-basic-foot-care-may2020.pdf>
2. https://aci.health.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/459709/ACI_Standards_for_High_Risk_Foot_Services.pdf