

Providing Foot Care

Overview

- Prevents infection and injury to soft tissues.
- Patients with peripheral vascular disease or diabetes mellitus need to be referred to a specialist, such as a podiatrist.
- Many institutions do not allow staff to perform foot care especially with diabetic patients—toenail clipping . Referral to a podiatrist is made (if applicable).

Preparation

- Assess the ability of the patient to perform his or her own nail care before intervening.
- Assess condition of feet, toes, and toenails.
- Inspect all surfaces of the nails.
- Assess color, pulses, and temperature of toes and feet.
- Check water temperature.

Special Considerations (for patients with diabetes or circulatory disorders)

- Diabetic patients may lack sensation in their feet and cuts, if unnoticed, by lead to infection.
- Feet, including soles, heels, and areas between toes should be inspected daily.
- Clean socks or stockings should be worn daily; walking on barefoot is never allowed.
- Feet should be dried properly, esp. between toes; lotion is applied for dry, flaky feet
- Insides of shoes should be checked for stones, tears, of foreign objects.
- Instruct patient not to cut corns or calluses.

Equipment

- Basin
- Nail clippers
- Emery board or nail file
- Disposable gloves
- Towel
- Orange stick

Procedure

- Inspect all surfaces of each foot. Check in between toes and around nail bed to detect early skin breakdown. Check pulse, skin color, and temperature, and compare to other foot. *Early detection of break in skin integrity. Identify circulatory problems.*
- Soak feet in basin filled with warm, soapy water before trimming the toenails. Gently wash each foot, between nails, and all surfaces. *Soaking softens the nails and allows them to be trimmed and cleaned easily. Washing removes dirt.*
- Thoroughly dry each foot including bet. toes. *Excess moisture leads to skin breakdown, possible fungal infections.*
- Perform nail care if allowed given facility policy and patient risks. *Improperly performed nail care can lead to nonhealing injuries, including the potential for amputation in patients with impaired circulation.*
- Push cuticle gently back with orange stick. *Reduces incidence of irritated, cracked, loose fragmented cuticles.*
- After soaking the nails and if appropriate (if nails are not thick), use a toenail clipper and clip nail straight across. Take care not to trim the nail too short. *Cutting straight across prevents formation of sharp nail spikes that can irritate nail margins.*
- Slowly trim all toenails as previously described. *Take time to trim slowly, avoiding cutting toenails at corners, which may damage tissues.*
- After all nails have been trimmed, lightly apply lotion to feet. *To lubricate dry skin and retain moisture.*