



Offloading

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WHAT IS PRESSURE?



When thinking of pressure, it might be helpful to picture a mortar and pestle. A mortar and pestle are small kitchen tools that work together to crush spices. If you removed either tool, then the spices will not break down.

When you have an ulcer on your foot, the continual pressure applied throughout the day by walking and standing, grinds your ulcer, just like the spices in the mortar and pestle. We can't remove gravity, but we can remove the pressure! Offloading, or taking the pressure away, is necessary to prevent further breakdown of your ulcer.

WHY IS OFFLOADING NECESSARY?

Your wound is a result of repetitive pressure. If you do not release this pressure, your wound will heal much slower or may not heal at all.

Offloading transfers the weight off of sensitive or painful areas. Depending on your ulcer location, age, activity, and home environment, your doctor will prescribe an offloading method. If you have an ulcer, good offloading should remove all pressure from your ulcer.

WHEN SHOULD I USE MY OFFLOADING DEVICE/SHOES?

Offloading devices should be worn anytime pressure is put on your foot. This means that if you are standing or walking, you should wear your device!

A good rule of thumb to follow: if your feet are coming in contact with the ground, you should offload. No matter what you are doing (walking, playing tennis, golfing, etc.) you must offload!



HOW DO I OFFLOAD?

There are two ways to offload a Diabetic Foot Ulcer:

- **Elevate your feet above the level of your heart when sitting or laying down**
- **Use an offloading device when walking**



There are many types of offloading options. Let's look at each type of device:

IRREMOVABLE OFFLOADING DEVICES

An irremovable device is permanently attached to your body until your healthcare provider removes it. A Total Contact Cast (TCC) is the most common type of irremovable offloading device. It is a soft cast that is applied at the wound clinic and must be removed by a skilled technician. You wear the TCC day and night, just like a traditional cast.

REMOVABLE OFFLOADING DEVICES

A removable device removes the pressure with each step. The downside to removable devices is that you can remove them! It is understandable that you get tired of wearing an offloading device. The temptation to remove the device can be very strong. Just remember that any type of

pressure that you put onto your foot is tearing up the wound. If your doctor gives you a removable device, you must be committed to wearing it!

TEMPORARY FOOTWEAR

Temporary Footwear is a popular choice for offloading, as it allows freedom of movement. The insole of this type of device consists of small pegs that can be removed based on the location of your ulcer. The insole looks like a finished puzzle where you can "punch out" specific pieces and then place the insole inside the shoe. Each time you walk, the ulcer lays into the open space rather than being pushed against the insole.



Your doctor can prescribe the best offloading device available but, if you don't put it on, it won't work! Every time you put unnecessary pressure on your foot, you are undoing the hard work of your wound care team to heal your ulcer. Wearing your offloading device is a great way to manage and accept ownership of your care.

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