Chapter 16

Keep Moving :
Why Your Feet Matter When You Take GLP-1 Weight Loss Medicine

A guide for people with diabetes

New medicines, new possibilities

New medicines such as semaglutide (Ozempic, Wegovy) and tirzepatide (Mounjaro, Zepbound) are helping many people with diabetes lose weight. Many people see their blood sugar improve and feel more energy.

But the medicine is only part of the plan. To keep the weight off and stay healthy over time, you also need to stay active. That means walking and moving every day. And that depends on your feet.

Why your feet need extra attention

Every time you take a step, your feet carry several times your body weight. When you start walking more, your feet, joints, and tendons work harder too.

Many people find that once they start moving more, foot problems show up that they never noticed while sitting. These problems often have nothing to do with willpower. Foot pain is one of the most common reasons people slow down or stop exercising.

Diabetes raises the stakes. It can cause:

- **Nerve damage (neuropathy).** You may not feel a blister, cut, or sore spot.
- **Poor blood flow.** Less blood reaches your feet, so they heal more slowly.

- **Slow healing.** A small problem can turn into an open wound or an infection.

A small blister or pressure spot can grow into a serious problem. In the worst cases, it can lead to amputation. The good news is that most of these problems can be found early and treated.

Warning signs to watch for

Call your doctor or podiatrist if you notice:

- Foot, heel, or ankle pain when you walk
- Blisters, calluses, or red spots from pressure
- Cuts or sores that are slow to heal
- Changes in the shape of your foot or toes
- Changes in your skin, such as cracks, color changes, or warmth
- Shoes that suddenly feel tight or rub in new places

Don't wait for pain. If you have nerve damage, you may not feel a problem until it is serious.

Simple steps you can take today

1. **Wear shoes that fit well.** Choose supportive shoes with enough room for your toes. Don't walk barefoot, even at home.
2. **Start slowly.** Add a little more walking each week. Give your feet time to adjust.
3. **Stretch before and after walking**
4. **Speak up about foot pain.** Tell your doctor if your feet hurt when you walk. Foot pain is not something you just have to live with.
5. **See a podiatrist at least once a year**, or more often if your doctor recommends it.

Early care makes a real difference

A five-year study at City of Hope found that people with diabetes who got early foot care and coordinated support had fewer foot ulcers and fewer major amputations than national averages. These results did not come from fancy technology. They came from patients staying involved in their care and getting help early.

The lesson is simple: **the earlier a foot problem is found, the better the outcome.**

The bottom line

GLP-1 medicines can be a powerful tool. But to get the most from them, you need to keep moving. And moving starts with your feet.

- Your medicine helps you lose weight.
- Staying active helps you keep it off.
- Healthy feet make staying active possible.

Take care of your feet, and they will help you take care of the rest of your health.

This information is for education only and does not replace advice from your own health care team.