

How Are Your Feet Feeling? A Simple Test that Could Save Your Feet

This patient/caregiver enabler was developed by Martine Albert, RN, BScN, IWCC, to help facilitate the use of CAWC monofilaments by patients with diabetes.

Preventing foot sores should be a major goal of people with diabetes. Sometimes people who have diabetes do not feel pain or hot and cold sensations on their feet. This is called a Loss of Protective of Sensation, or "LOPS." A loss of sensation can also be referred to as *sensory neuropathy*. This condition increases a person's risk for injury to their feet. If LOPS is found, it is essential that the patient's feet get proper attention and care.

It is important that feet be *routinely* tested to see if they have a change in sensation. A quick, easy and inexpensive test can be done using a small piece of monofilament similar to a piece of fishing line. If a person cannot feel the monofilament on one or more sites on their feet there is an increased risk of injury. The test outlined below can be done by a health-care professional or by anyone trained in the procedure and will help determine if there is a loss of protective sensation.

How to Perform Sensory Testing

Step 1

- Ask the person who will be tested to get in a comfortable position.
- Remove his or her shoes and socks.
- Explain the test and the reason for doing it.
- Show the monofilament.
- Demonstrate on their forearm how the monofilament bends and feels.
- Clarify that the filament is not sharp and is like a fishing line.

Step 2

- Explain that you will be touching the feet (one at a time) in 10 areas (see Diagram 1 for the locations).
- Make sure the feet are in a neutral position and ask the person being tested to close their eyes.
- Ask them to say "yes" when they feel the filament and, if they can, to tell you where they are feeling it.

Step 3

• Hold the monofilament at 90° degrees to the foot.

- Press it against the first site.
- Make sure there is enough pressure to bend the filament into a C curve (see Diagram 2).
- Keep the pressure in place for one to two seconds.
- Do not slide and avoid making repeated contact in one area.

Step 4

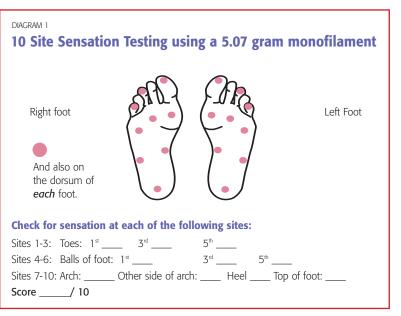
- Keep a record using a + sign for feeling or a sign for no feeling, then add the + signs to get a score.
- Change the sequence of test sites to prevent the person from sensing a pattern.
- Do not test over callouses or corns.
- Discuss your findings with the person being tested.
- Provide education as needed.

Conclusion

The monofilament tool can be a useful screening and assessment test to identify LOPS and to help reduce the incidence of diabetic foot problems.







Web Connect Tips for creating effective enablers are available in the *Wound Care Canada* section of the CAWC Web Site at www.cawc.net.

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