

PREVENTING AMPUTATIONS

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Most diabetes-related amputations can be prevented. These are steps that both people with diabetes and their health care providers can take to help prevent these amputations.



PEOPLE WITH DIABETES

Steps you can take if you have diabetes:

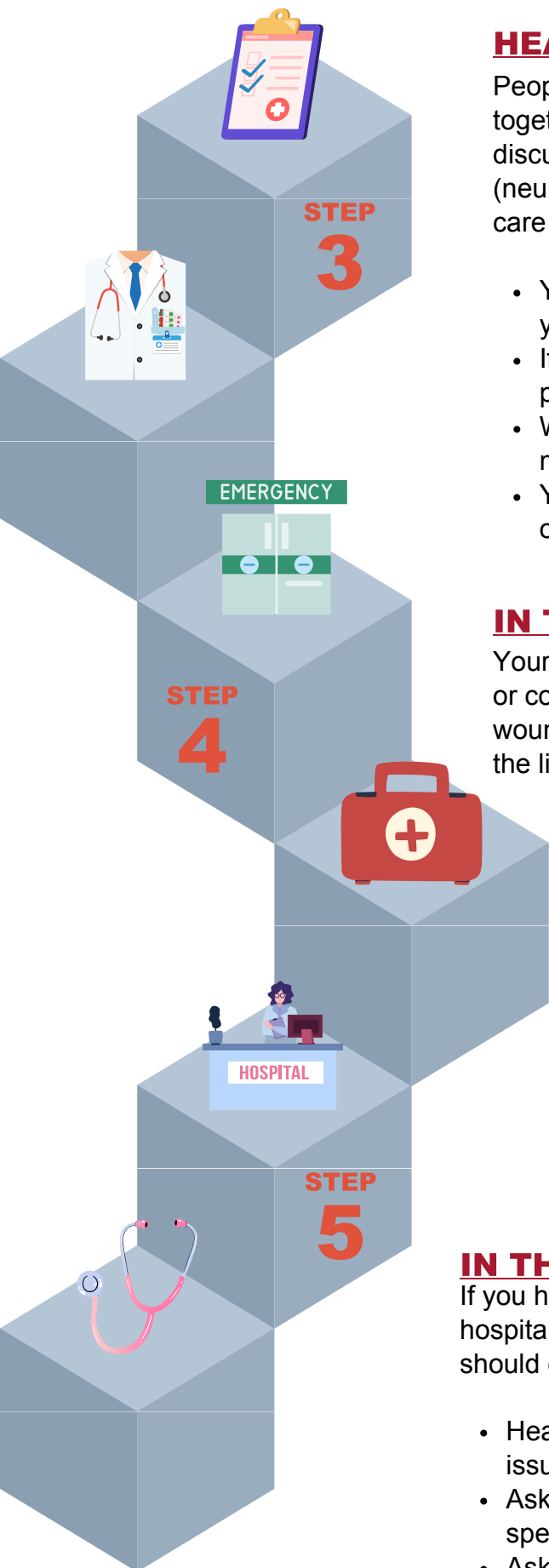
- Check your feet every day for problems.
- Let your health care provider know if you see anything unusual, like swelling, toenails changing color, or foul odors. Also let your health care provider know if you feel any tingling or have trouble feeling your legs and feet.
- Wear shoes that fit well and don't rub your feet. Shoes should never need a "break in" period.
- Follow your diabetes treatment plan and be sure to reach your physical activity goals.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Take advantage of these resources that may be available in your community:

- Take part in screenings at community health centers or by local health care professionals.
- Have your feet measured before you buy shoes to be sure they will fit properly when wearing them.
- Make sure that those caring for you know about proper foot care. Have them talk to your health care provider, if needed. Community health fairs and senior living facilities may offer training and education on foot care.





HEALTH CARE VISITS

People with diabetes and health care professionals should work together to be sure any new lower limb problems are found and discussed. Focus on new sensations, signs of nerve damage (neuropathy), or wounds. Here are some steps to take at the health care visit:

- You should have a comprehensive foot exam at least once a year.
- If you have a foot problem, ask for a referral to services performed by a foot doctor (podiatrist).
- When seeing a health care provider, discuss any foot issues you may have, including pain and numbness.
- Your health care provider will also screen for any other conditions or complications you may have.

IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM

Your health care provider will also screen for any other conditions or complications you may have. This can be a non-healing wound, gangrene forming, or other complications that increase the likelihood of an amputation. If you find yourself in the ER:

- Insist on a having your blood flow in your lower limbs checked (a vascular assessment) any other treatments and tests being performed—this is especially true if you're told you may need an amputation.
- Always seek a second opinion if you're told you need procedures, including revascularization, amputation, or bypass procedures.
- Ask for a referral to a specialist, including for advanced vascular assessments, wound care experts, or others.
- In the presence of a diabetes-related foot ulcer, see a wound care specialist.

IN THE HOSPITAL

If you have diabetes, you are at increased risk for being admitted to the hospital for treatment and amputation. If you are in the hospital, you should expect or ask for:

- Health care providers to look at and address symptoms of foot issues or any other problems you may have.
- Ask for opinions about your care options from other medical specialists.
- Ask if all appropriate vascular screenings and assessments have been done before any amputation is conducted.
- Ask about other treatment approaches that could be taken, such as bypass procedures, medications, or restoring blood flow.
- Be sure to follow up with a wound care specialist.