



**The Shrewsbury and
Telford Hospital**
NHS Trust

Patient Information

Osteomyelitis (Bone infection)

Diabetes Foot Clinic

Diabetes Foot Clinic Telephone: 01743 261000 Extension: 3055 (Monday to Friday 08.30am to 16.30pm)

Diabetes Foot Clinic Email: sath.dfc@nhs.net

Community Podiatry Telephone: 01743 277681
Monday to Friday 09.00am to 17.00pm)

Emergency mobile: 07843 50 50 15
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 08.30am to 16.30pm

If you need advice outside of these working hours, please contact your GP or 111 and contact the foot clinic the next working day.

You have been given this leaflet because the Diabetes Foot Clinic thinks that you may have osteomyelitis.

What is Osteomyelitis?

Osteomyelitis is an infection in the bone. Anyone can develop osteomyelitis; however you are more at risk if you have:

- Diabetes, especially if you have a foot ulcer.
- Recently broken (fractured) a bone.
- Recently had any surgery near a bone.
- Had osteomyelitis before.
- A weakened immune system.

Osteomyelitis – What are the risks?

Osteomyelitis can be difficult to remove and will delay the healing of your foot ulcer (if you have one).

Osteomyelitis is a much deeper infection, than just infection of the skin and can cause serious problems increasing the chance of amputation.

Diagnosing Osteomyelitis

Your clinicians might think you have osteomyelitis just from the appearance of the affected area, if it is red, hot, swollen, or 'sausage like'.

Normally if your podiatrists can see or feel bone (with a small thin sterile probe) in a wound area then this would usually indicate that infection has now reached the bone and osteomyelitis may be present.

- **X-rays** are a fast and an easy way to look for osteomyelitis. However, X-rays can't always detect very early stage osteomyelitis. In this case, if the doctors have a high suspicion of osteomyelitis, they might start treatment straight away, and ask you to attend another X-ray two weeks later. This way, changes to bone found in osteomyelitis can be detected on X-ray without delaying your treatment.
- **MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)** can help see osteomyelitis with more accuracy, and may be used in cases where X-rays have not helped. However, X-rays are normally used first, to help you get on the right treatment faster.
- **Blood tests**—Blood tests can be used to help build up a bigger picture of what may be happening inside your body. The team will check the inflammation levels in your blood to see if they are raised. If they are higher than normal – this may be an indication of infection.

Why is Osteomyelitis difficult to treat?

Antibiotics find it difficult to get into the bones to remove and kill germs, making osteomyelitis difficult to treat. Not-treating osteomyelitis can continue causing damage to your foot.

Osteomyelitis Treatment Options:

- **Oral Antibiotic Tablets**—because antibiotics don't go into the bones well a mixture of different antibiotics are usually taken for a minimum of 6 weeks continuously.

It is important to keep taking the antibiotics, to prevent bacteria or 'superbugs' developing inside the bone, which would then take even longer to remove. If you feel like you might struggle to take several antibiotics with your usual medicines please talk to our team about dosette boxes, to organise & make it easier to take your medicines.

- **Intravenous (IV) Antibiotics (via DAART)** - Special antibiotics can be given at higher doses when given through a very small needle, directly into a vein, usually by visiting the hospital everyday for 6 weeks. Sometimes this is better than just antibiotic tablets alone.
- **Antibiotic beads or cement** - applied surgically directly to the infected bone. This way antibiotics are delivered much closer to where they are needed. The cement or beads, continuously release antibiotics to the bone for several week.
- **Surgical removal of the affected bone** – Sometimes, bone infection can be too difficult to remove, so the best way forward may be to surgically remove that part of the foot / toe to stop the infection spreading further into your foot or leg. This is usually performed as planned surgery. However, in rare cases where the infection has spread into your bloodstream causing sepsis (a life threatening infection) this may be needed as emergency life saving surgery.

Side Effects

It is normal to experience side effects with antibiotics, especially tummy side effects such as diarrhoea and sickness. If it causes you distress please do contact the Diabetes Foot Clinic for further advice

Treatment of a Diabetes Foot Ulcer

If you have osteomyelitis underneath a diabetes foot ulcer it is important that you stick to all the other parts of your treatment plan. If you are having difficulty managing please talk to our team. We are here to help.

The faster your diabetes foot ulcer heals, the less likely you are to develop osteomyelitis complication.

Please see our '*Diabetes Foot Ulcer—What is a foot ulcer and what can I do to help*' leaflet) for further information

If you have any questions or concerns please just ask. We want to help you get the best out of your treatment.

Further information is available from;

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

We act on your behalf when handling patient and family concerns, liaising with staff, managers and where appropriate, relevant organisations to negotiate immediate or prompt solutions. We can also help you get support from other local or national agencies.

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Tel: 0800 783 0057 or 01743 261691

Princess Royal Hospital, Tel: 01952 282888

Other Sources of Information

NHS 111

A fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

Telephone: 111 (free from a landline or mobile)

Website: www.nhs.uk

Patient UK

Provides leaflets on health and disease translated into 11 other languages as well as links to national support/self-help groups and a directory of UK health websites.

Website: www.patient.info

Self Help & Support Groups

A selection of websites providing access to good quality patient and consumer health information, covering specific age groups and conditions.

Also includes Shropshire Community Directory which contains up-to-date information on community groups, clubs, societies, organisations, support groups and self-help groups covering Shropshire and its borders.

Website: www.library.sath.nhs.uk/find/patients/

Website: www.sath.nhs.uk

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