



Diabetes  
New Zealand

# Graham Brand: A long road to healed feet

For 67 years Graham Brand and his feet got along perfectly fine. Until 1995, when his troubles started.

Having unusually shaped feet with a high arch meant Graham always had to be concerned about his feet, often buying special shoes from Australia for fit and comfort. The first indication of serious trouble came after one of Graham's regular self-treatments.

'I'd always cut the calluses off using blades and then ten years ago I ended up with an infection in both feet. When they went a beetroot colour I went to a podiatrist who sent me to the doctor. I was put on to crutches and had to report three times a day for injections.'

Eventually Graham was admitted to hospital and that was when he was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. After discharge, he had to go to the doctor's surgery regularly for his changes of dressings. That's where he got his first piece of advice on foot care, 'don't let anyone near your feet with a scalpel.'

By 1999 Graham's wounds had not healed and he was referred to a vascular surgeon, and then to an orthopaedic surgeon who observed him in hospital for a week. 'The surgeon did not want to operate on the septic wounds so he put my leg in plaster and lifted the foot off the ground. It took nine months for my foot to heal.'

Specially made orthotic shoes eased the pressure, but didn't stop the ball of Graham's foot breaking down. Various treatments by podiatry students, diabetes specialist podiatrists, and fortnightly WIPA clinics (run by Wellington Independent Practitioners Association) followed for Graham. 'Now I'm doing well and just go along every month to get the ball of the foot debrided. I can now put the foot into a sock without cumbersome bandaging for the first time for many years.'

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A retired advertising agent, Graham's foot problems have made it difficult for him to keep his property maintained in Otaihangā on the Kapiti Coast. However, Graham is a member of Diabetes Kapiti and enjoys going to society meetings. 'They are very instructive and do a wonderful job on education. Support from a society is essential for someone with diabetes.'

The best advice Graham received about managing his diabetes was from a dietitian. 'When you are about to eat something, ask yourself "where is the fat in this food, where is the sugar"? If I don't know what's in a food, I don't eat it. If I see fat on meat, I cut it off. I don't eat butter.'

Graham's messages to others about foot care are emphatic. 'Don't mess about with your feet as infection can spread very quickly. Definitely don't do your own surgery.'