

# Using Monofilaments and Mirrors to Prevent Diabetic Ulcers and Infections

## Micro-Learn Discussion Guide

Use the talking points below and the accompanying job aid to engage your team in a short, focused discussion. Adapt to meet your facility's needs and context.

### 1. Introduce the Topic

Start with the "Why":

- In the Blackfeet Nation, diabetes affects an estimated **1 in 8 community members**.
- Many patients delay care due to transportation challenges, family responsibilities, or discomfort with clinical settings. This delay increases the risk of **foot ulcers**, which can become infected and lead to hospitalizations, amputations, or systemic infections.

Explain what this session is about:

- This Micro-Learn is about using **simple tools—monofilaments and mirrors**—to prevent wounds and the infections that can come from them.

Why this matters for infection control:

- Open wounds are **entry points for bacteria**. When wounds are caught early—or prevented altogether—we reduce the chance of infections spreading within our clinics, long-term care facility, or at home.

### 2. Expand on the Topic

What should staff do with these tools?

- **Monofilament test:**
  - Gently press the nylon filament on 10–12 specific points on the foot until it bends. If the patient **doesn't feel the touch**, they may have lost protective sensation, which increases their risk for ulcers and unnoticed injury.
- **Mirror use:**
  - Encourage patients to check the bottoms of their feet daily using a mirror or with the help of a family member or caregiver. Look for *redness, blisters, cuts, swelling, or drainage*—early signs of infection risk.
- **Infection Control Tie-In:**
  - Wear gloves if touching patient feet or wounds.
  - Wash hands before and after helping a patient.
  - Wipe down reusable tools like mirrors or monofilament handles (if not single-use).
  - Refer patients with any signs of skin breakdown, warmth, odor, or drainage.

### 3. Discuss with your team

Explore staff experiences and promote shared learning:

**Sample questions:**

- Have you helped a patient use a mirror or monofilament before? What worked well—or didn't?
- How confident do you feel identifying a foot at risk for ulcers or infection?
- What are some barriers our patients face in doing foot checks daily? How can we help?
- How can we encourage patients to tell us about foot problems before they get worse?

### 4. Wrap up and reinforce

Key takeaways:

- **Monofilaments and mirrors help catch foot problems early.** Early care = fewer infections, fewer hospital visits, fewer amputations.
- **You don't have to be a specialist to prevent infections.** All staff—CNA, CMA, nurse, CHR—can help a patient check their feet and know what to watch for.
- **Clean hands, gloves, and safe handling** of tools protect you and your patients.

Facility-specific follow-up:

- Kits with monofilaments and mirrors are being distributed at clinics and long-term care. Ask your supervisor or CHR where to find them.
- If a patient needs help checking their feet, contact the **diabetes nurse, podiatrist, or CHR team**.
- For more education resources, check out CDC's Project Firstline: [cdc.gov/projectfirstline](https://cdc.gov/projectfirstline)

# Preventing Diabetic Ulcers: Mirror & Monofilament Use for Early Detection and Infection Prevention

## Why This Matters

- **1 in 8 people** in the Blackfeet Nation lives with **diabetes**.
- Small foot injuries can lead to **ulcers, infections, and amputations**—especially when not detected early.
- **YOU** can help prevent this by **performing daily foot checks** using a mirror and monofilament.
- **Preventing ulcers is an infection control priority** across all care settings.



## How to Use a Mirror

**Goal:** Catch skin changes early

- Have the patient **inspect** bottoms and sides of feet **daily**.
- Use a handheld or floor mirror, or ask a caregiver for help.
- Look for:
  - ▲ Redness or swelling
  - ▲ Blisters or cuts
  - ▲ Drainage or odor
  - ▲ Discoloration or warm spots

**Report any findings immediately to the nurse or provider.**

## How to Use a Monofilament

**Goal:** Check for loss of sensation

- Use a 10g **monofilament**.
- Test **10–12 spots** on each foot (toes, heel, ball, side).
- Press until the **filament bends**, then lift off.
- If the patient **doesn't feel** the touch in several spots, **they may be at risk**

**Clean/discard** the monofilament after use.

**Use gloves** if you touch skin or wounds.

Always **wash your hands** before and after.



## INFECTION PREVENTION REMINDERS

- Don't ignore small wounds or drainage—they can quickly get infected.
- Clean tools between patients.
- Help patients understand the importance of early care to prevent hospitalizations and amputations.