

Healing Your Diabetic Foot Ulcer

Q: What is a diabetic foot ulcer?

A: Diabetic foot ulcers (DFUs) are chronic wounds that can develop on the foot or lower extremities of people with diabetes. DFUs can result from complications of diabetes, such as peripheral neuropathy (loss of feeling in the lower extremities due to nerve damage). Among people with diabetes, about 15% experience a DFU in their lifetime; 2.5% of these people develop a foot ulcer every year.

(correspond illustration and text)



Q: What is Dermagraft?

A: Dermagraft is a safe and effective “skin substitute” that is placed on your wound to cover it and to help it heal. It is manufactured in an aseptic environment. Dermagraft stimulates your own skin cells to multiply and heal your wound. It also contains a temporary mesh fabric that will eventually dissolve and go away by itself. Dermagraft is used to treat foot ulcers that have been present for at least 6 weeks in patients with diabetes. It is used together with standard methods of treating foot ulcers, including cleaning and preparing the wound, applying cover dressings to hold it in place, and wearing special shoes to take the pressure off the sore (called “off-loading”).

(correspond illustration and text)

Q: What makes Dermagraft unique?

A: Dermagraft:

Is an advanced wound care product that contains living human skin cells

Incorporates patented technology that was developed through many years of research

Heals ulcers faster than standard treatment that does not include Dermagraft

Q: How can I be sure it's safe?

A: Dermagraft is manufactured under closely controlled conditions and thoroughly tested throughout the manufacturing process to make sure that it is free from any contaminants.

Q: Why have we recommended Dermagraft?

A: For people with diabetes, even ordinary health issues can get worse and lead to further complications. A chronic foot ulcer can be a serious problem, even leading to amputation if not properly treated and healed. Due to certain conditions in people with diabetes, such as poor blood flow to the feet, conventional care may not be enough to close a foot ulcer.

Dermagraft Therapy

Before you begin therapy, we will perform a physical examination and explain the types of tests and treatments you will be receiving. You may also receive an X-ray or MRI to make sure that the bones in your feet are not infected. A culture (a sample of tissue to detect bacteria) may be performed on your wound to determine if an antibiotic is necessary.

Application

Dermagraft does not cause pain or irritation when in place. However, debridement—the necessary removal of old and dead tissue from the wound site—can cause some discomfort. Dermagraft will be placed on your wound regularly (typically, once a week).

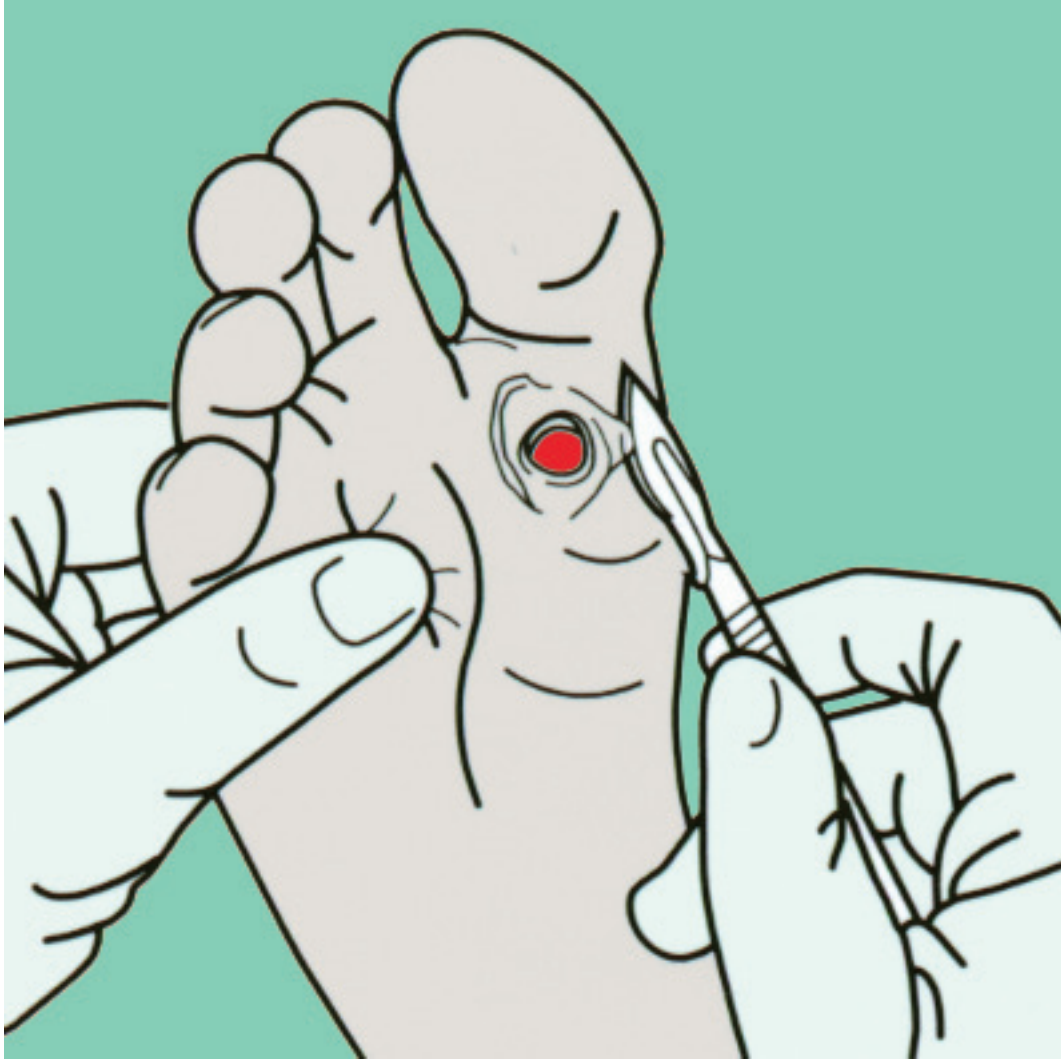
Offload (Keep weight off the wound)

It is very important that you follow our instructions involving the use of special shoes or devices to relieve pressure on the wound area. Walking on an ulcer may make it larger and can kill living cells.

Applying Dermagraft

Q: What will happen during my visits?

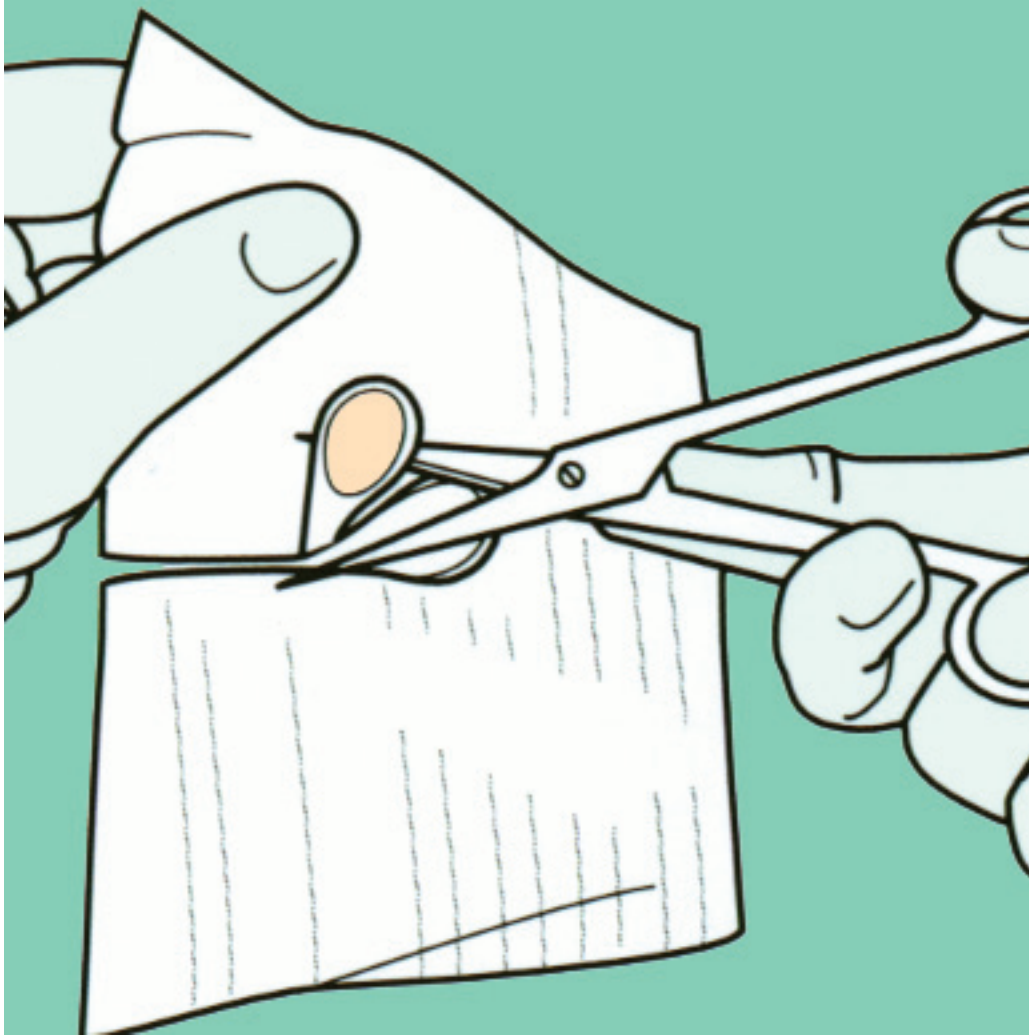
A: We will apply Dermagraft to your wound on a regular schedule, typically once a week. The duration of treatment varies, but Dermagraft is usually applied on your foot sore up to 8 times—about 8 weeks. It is very important that you keep each of your scheduled appointments to ensure that your wound keeps healing.



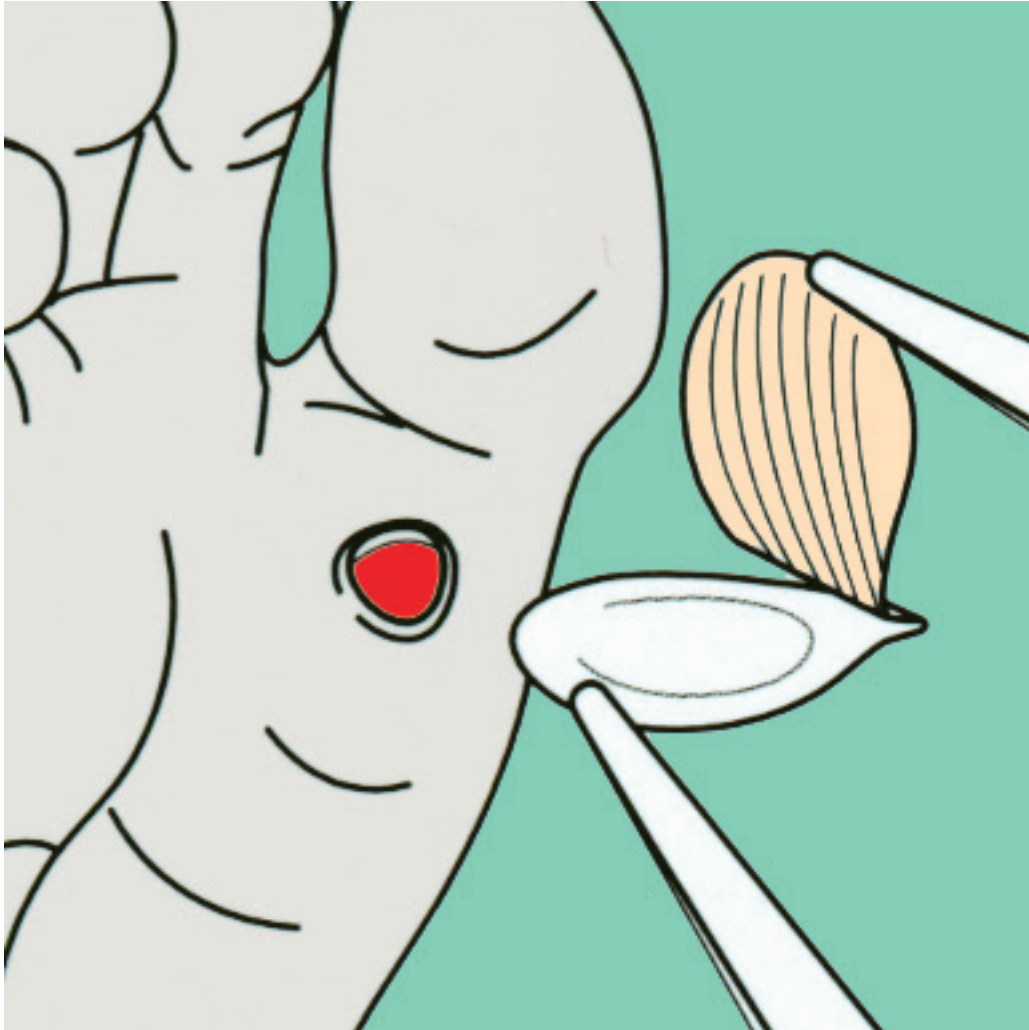
We will perform a short series of steps at each visit:

1. We will remove the dead or unhealthy skin around your wound—this is called debridement. Then, we will clean your wound with a sterile saline solution. This is necessary to make sure there is a clean surface for application of Dermagraft.

(correspond illustration and text)

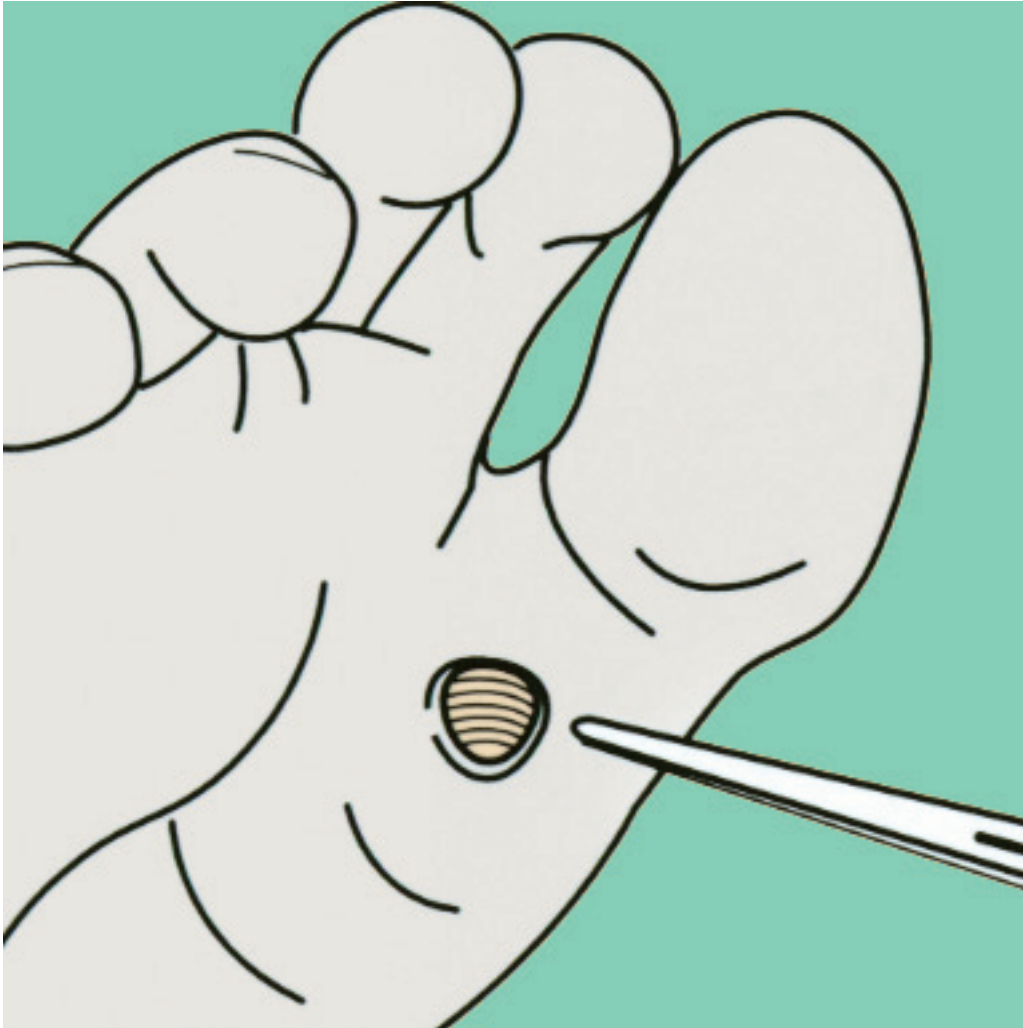


2. The Dermagraft product will be thawed, rinsed, and cut to the size of your wound.
(correspond illustration and text)



3. Dermagraft will be placed on your wound and covered with another dressing to keep it clean and protected.

(correspond illustration and text)



4. Once Dermagraft and the protective dressing are in place, you will be instructed on how to care for your wound, including how to change the dressings when appropriate and how to keep pressure off your wound so it can heal quickly.

(correspond illustration and text)

The Healing Wound

Q: What can I do to help my wound heal?

A: You are the most important person when it comes to healing your foot ulcer.

Here are several ways you can help your wound heal faster:

Cover your wound when bathing.

Keep the wound and dressing dry, as instructed by your doctor.

Keep weight off the wound.

Offloading relieves pressure around the ulcer. Increased pressure or stepping on an unprotected foot can slow the healing process.

Lead a diabetes-friendly lifestyle.

Eat well-balanced, portion-conscious meals, work with your healthcare team to plan a physical activity program, and stop smoking. Smoking may constrict blood flow needed at the wound site for proper healing.

Return for your medical appointments.

Your doctor will check on your progress, make any treatment changes, and place a new piece of Dermagraft

Take your diabetes medications.

Keep your blood sugar within target range. Higher glucose levels make it harder to fight infection and to heal wounds.

Watch your blood sugar. According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), keeping your feet healthy starts with taking care of your diabetes. Check your blood sugar as directed by your healthcare provider, to make sure that your blood sugar is within your target range every day.

Watch for infection.

Call us if you notice any changes in the wound.

Signs of infection include:

- A rise in temperature/fever

- An increase in blood sugar

Swollen, red, or red-streaked skin near the wound

Discharge, drainage, foul odor, warmth, and/or pain around the wound

Successful Offloading

Q: What special precautions should I take?

A: We will instruct you to always wear special treatment shoes or to use other offloading devices to reduce the amount of weight on your foot in order to help heal your wound.

Follow these tips for successful offloading:

- Wear the special treatment shoe or offloading device. Do not go barefoot, even when inside. Just one step on your unprotected foot may slow your healing progress or might displace the Dermagraft.
 - If we ask you to use a walking aid such as a cane, crutches, or walker, be sure to use this aid according to the instructions. These devices will help with balance, especially if you are not used to wearing a special shoe.
 - If your walking aid is not comfortable to use, or you are having problems with it, let us know immediately.
 - If a shoe insert becomes worn out, let your us know immediately.
 - If your special shoe or offloading device does not seem to fit properly, let us know immediately.
 - Report any new areas of redness or irritation. Small adjustments may be needed to ensure optimal healing and to prevent new wounds from developing.
- Wear clean, dry, properly fitting socks with your treatment shoe.
- Do not wear socks or stockings that are torn, have been mended, or have seams in them.