



**Doug Ducey**  
Governor

**Joey Ridenour**  
Executive Director

## *Arizona State Board of Nursing*

4747 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 200  
Phoenix, AZ 85014-3655  
Phone (602) 771-7800 Fax - (602) 771-7888  
E-Mail: arizona@azbn.gov  
Home Page: www.azbn.gov

An advisory opinion adopted by AZBN is an interpretation of what the law requires. While an advisory opinion is not law, it is more than a recommendation. In other words, an advisory opinion is an official opinion of AZBN regarding the practice of nursing as it relates to the functions of nursing. Facility policies may restrict practice further in their setting and/or require additional expectations related to competency, validation, training, and supervision to assure the safety of their patient population and or decrease risk.

**OPINION:**  
**APPROVED DATE:** 07/12  
**REVISED DATE:**  
**ORIGINATING COMMITTEE:**  
**SCOPE OF PRACTICE COMMITTEE**

Within the Scope of Practice of   X   RN   X   LPN

### ADVISORY OPINION FOOT CARE

It is within the Scope of Practice for a Registered Nurse to perform foot care on patients with high risk for significant complications based on patient assessment and level of nursing certification as delineated below. Patients at high risk for complications include the following, but are not limited to: diabetes/mellitus (DM), peripheral vascular disease (PVD), musculoskeletal disorders, venous insufficiency, and other diagnoses with potential to negatively impact wound healing.

It is within the Scope of Practice for a Licensed Practical Nurse to contribute to the initial assessment of the feet through the gathering and recording of assessment data and to perform Level 1 Basic Foot Care in collaboration with the Registered Nurse or Licensed Independent Practitioner if the following requirements are met:

#### I. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

	<b>Level 1 Basic Foot Care</b>	<b>Level 2 Intermediate Foot Care</b>	<b>Level 3 Advanced Foot Care</b>
Required Training & Certification	All RN's and LPN's may perform Level 1 Basic Foot Care.	Only RNs & LPNs with nationally accredited training and documented competency may perform Level 2 Intermediate Foot Care	Only a Nurse Practitioner with certification in foot care may perform Level 3 Advanced Foot Care.
Nursing Care	Evaluation of: a. Past medical history including DM, PVD, peripheral neuropathy, and other disease processes b. Skin integrity, circulation, edema c. Foot and nail structure, disorders, deformities  Basic care includes: a. Filing and trimming nails (straight across and not to short) for patients that have:	a. Complex wound care prescribed by a physician or authorized Licensed Independent Practitioner (LIP) b. Use of an electric nail file, clipping and thinning of unusually long or thick toenails for patients with high risk for complications c. Debridement (manual, mechanical, surgical, and chemical) d. Paring of small, non-painful	a. An advanced practice RN with prescriptive authority may prescribe medications such as antifungal agents and/or antibiotics to treat infections b. Excise an ingrown toenail c. Order corrective footwear devices into the plan of care d. Advanced wound care management e. Packing or partial excision of nail plate to treat an ingrown

	<b>Level 1 Basic Foot Care</b>	<b>Level 2 Intermediate Foot Care</b>	<b>Level 3 Advanced Foot Care</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Toenails of normal thickness</li> <li>2. Normal sensation of feet</li> <li>3. Palpable dorsalis pedis pulses</li> <li>4. No history of disease processes that are at high risk for foot complications, such as DM, PVD, musculoskeletal disorders, venous insufficiency, etc.</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. Interventions to promote skin integrity and prevent ulcerations such as applying prescribed topical products (not between toes) to patients with intact skin</li> <li>c. Foot screening and performance of Monofilament test to check for loss of sensation</li> <li>d. Referral to an appropriate practitioner for additional assessment and care when needed</li> <li>e. Documentation specific to intervention including wound description/ measurement, plan of care, and evaluation</li> <li>f. Application of unna boots with annual documented competency of correct procedure filed with employer</li> <li>g. Obtain wound cultures and perform treatment of minor infections with physician order and management</li> <li>h. Educating the patient in diabetic foot care to include the following               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Awareness of personal risk factors</li> <li>2. Importance of at least an annual foot inspection by a health care professional</li> <li>3. Daily self-inspection of feet</li> <li>4. Skin and nail care according to the American Diabetes Association</li> <li>5. Injury prevention</li> <li>6. When to seek help or specialized referral</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>corns and calluses that may require the use of a curette, nail nippers, grinders with a sanding disc or drum, and a paring device</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f. Modification of preventive footwear</li> </ol>	<p>toenail</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f. Paring of painful or complicated callus or corn</li> </ol>
Specific Requirements	Documentation specific to performed intervention including but not limited to wound description/measurement, education, and referral	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Prescription by a physician or authorized LIP</li> <li>b. Signed patient consent for treatment after being informed by Physician or LIP.</li> <li>c. Adherence to employers policy and procedures</li> <li>d. Documentation specific to intervention including assessment, wound description/measurement, plan of care, and evaluation</li> <li>e. Referral of patients to additional specialty care (Podiatrist/Physician) as patient's condition warrants</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Prescription by a physician or authorized LIP</li> <li>b. Signed, informed patient consent for treatment</li> <li>c. Adherence to employers policy and procedures</li> <li>d. Documentation for interventions to include assessment, evaluation, treatment and care</li> <li>e. Referral of patients to additional specialty care (Podiatrist/Physician) as patient's condition warrants</li> </ol>

**II. COURSE OF INSTRUCTION for Level 2 and 3 to include, but not limited to:**

**A. Common foot pathology**

1. Anatomy, physiology, and comprehensive assessment of the foot and lower extremities.
2. Structure and function of the foot and nail
3. Changes in the foot due to age and chronic diseases
4. Prediction and prevention of diabetic foot wounds and complications

5. Pathogenesis/Epidemiology of diabetic foot complications and the impact of these complications
6. Classification of overall foot risk and appropriate referral/clinic management
7. Nerve damage and foot pain in persons with diabetes & other chronic conditions

B. Instruction/knowledge regarding interventions, treatment and management including:

1. Diabetic foot infections
2. Chronic and complex wounds
3. Debridement (manual, mechanical, and chemical)
4. Nail disease, fungal infections, and ingrown toenails
5. Instruments used in foot care such as curet, nail nippers, grinders with a sanding disc or drum, paring device, and electric nail file.
6. Sterilization of instruments and infection control procedures
7. Advanced wound care devices, dressings
8. Orthotics and other footwear.
9. Pharmacological and non-pharmacological management options
10. Packing or partial excision of nail plate to treat an ingrown toenail

### III. RATIONALE

Foot ulcerations can result in significant morbidity and are the most common reason for amputation in the patient with diabetes. Foot conditions are associated with significant costs and complications, especially when the care provided is inappropriate, incomplete or sporadic. Specialized Foot Care is an evolving field that requires higher standards than basic nursing curriculum.

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