



*The Nova Scotia College of Nursing (NSCN) is the regulatory body for licensed practical nurses (LPNs), registered nurses (RNs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) in Nova Scotia. Our mandate is to protect the public by promoting the provision of safe, competent, ethical and compassionate nursing services by its registrants. The term nurse in this document refers to LPNs, NPs, and RNs unless otherwise stated.*

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Nurses provide basic and advanced foot care for clients in a variety of practice settings, including the self-employed context. This document is a resource for nurses providing foot care and will enable nurses to assist in their understanding of:

- Basic and advanced foot care practice
- Responsibility of the nurse
- Responsibility of the employer
- Medication administration for self-employed nurses
- Titles and abbreviations

Like all regulatory documents, use this document in conjunction with the standards of practice, code of ethics and applicable practice guidelines found on our website at [www.nscn.ca](http://www.nscn.ca).

## Basic and Advanced Foot Care Practice

The foundational knowledge related to basic nursing foot care is part of entry-level nursing education and is an entry-level competency for all nurses.

Advanced foot care knowledge is required for clients who have comorbidities because these clients are at increased risk of complications associated with foot care, even if they are not experiencing any lower leg or foot issues. If the client's lower leg and foot are impacted by disease, the nurse should possess advanced foot care knowledge to prevent, anticipate and manage any complications that may be associated with foot care.

Nurses who wish to further develop their competence in the area of advanced foot care require additional education. Additional education can be obtained through the employer, education facility or private educator.

NSCN does not endorse, recommend or approve any foot care education or courses. Nurses with advanced foot care education are expected to practice according to their standards of practice and best practices in advanced foot care.

## Responsibility of the Nurse

Nurses are expected to provide safe and competent foot care. To do this, you must:

- Obtain the appropriate advanced foot care education
- Follow organizational policies specific to foot care or develop and follow clear foot care policies if you are self-employed
- Ensure your practice is consistent with best practices in foot care, including care of equipment.

### Scope of Practice

The client's primary care provider must be consulted if the needs of the client exceeds your individual or professional scope of practice. Clients should be referred to a walk-in clinic or Emergency Department if the client does not have a family physician or NP and their need is emergent.

Nurses are not authorized to autonomously perform foot care procedure below the level of the dermis because of the inherent risks in doing so. Any foot care procedure below the dermis requires a medical diagnosis and an order or authorization from a primary care provider.

### Liability Coverage

All nurses licensed with NSCN have professional liability insurance. Nurses in a self-employed practice are encouraged to consult with their respective liability provider to discuss additional liability protection:

- [Lloyd Sudd Insurance Brokers Ltd](#) for LPNs
- [The Canadian Nurses Protective Society](#) for RNs.

## Responsibility of the Employer

Employers play an important role in ensuring the delivery of safe and competent foot care. This includes:

- Providing learning opportunities for nurses to maintain their competence
- Providing clear policies and directives for foot care
- Ensuring nurses have obtained the appropriate education and competence

## Administering Medications and Devices

Nurses working in organizations that provide foot care to clients are required to follow organizational policy and processes as indicated for the administration of medications and the provision of devices.

## Administering Medications and Devices for Self-Employed Nurses

If your nursing assessment indicates that the client may require a prescription medication or foot care device, you are obligated to collaborate with the most appropriate prescriber for this, such as a physician or NP. Prescribing is outside of the scope of practice of all LPNs and outside the scope of practice of RNs who have not completed additional education to obtain the authorization to prescribe medication.

### Self-Employed LPNs Recommending and Administering Over The Counter Medications and Devices

Some clients receiving foot care may need over the counter (OTC) medications or devices to aid in their care. LPNs may recommend OTC medications or devices only in the limited specific context of advanced foot care practice.

The LPN must have the competencies in advanced foot care provided all of the following parameters are in place:

- The client needs are known and the medications or devices are, or has been part of an established plan of care and the client's response(s) to the medications or devices are, or have been known, consistent over time, and are readily anticipated
- There is access to sufficient resources (policy, equipment, referral process) in the practice setting to support the client or the LPN if necessary
- The LPN has the competence to safely administer medications or educate the client about the medications or devices and can predict and manage the outcome of the client's response

Clients seeking recommendation for OTC medications or devices to manage issues other than those related to the lower leg and foot need referred to an appropriate healthcare provider or health care service.

### Self-Employed RNs Recommending and Administering Over The Counter Medications and Devices

RNs may recommend and administer OTC medications or devices as long as they have the competence to do so. The RN must ensure the OTC medications or devices they are recommending is treating an already diagnosed condition and not new symptoms which would require further assessment by a physician or NP.

## Titles and Abbreviations

Many nursing specialties have certification programs with established organizations such as the Canadian Nurses Association. There are currently no established certification programs for foot care in Canada. Additionally, NSCN does not maintain a specialized practice register or grant a specialized designation to those who have completed additional education in foot care.

We do not authorize the use of titles, signatures or abbreviations that convey or imply a nurse has attained a specialized foot care credential because it is misleading to the public and provides the impression that NSCN approved foot care credentials or certification has been achieved.

Potentially misleading terms, titles and abbreviations include: “verified” or “certified”, “Certified Foot Care Nurse”, “CFCN” or “FCN” or the title “Foot Care Nurse” as part of the nurse’s signature.

## Key Points

- Basic foot care is part of entry level education.
- Advanced foot care requires additional education from the employer, education facility or private educator.
- Self-employed foot care nurses are required to secure additional liability insurance
- Nurses work in collaboration with other health care providers to ensure client care is provided when the client’s care needs exceeds the nurse’s scope of practice
- Nurses must adhere to the OTC guidelines in order to recommend OTC medications or devices
- NSCN does not authorize the use of titles, signatures or abbreviations specific to foot care

## Suggested Readings:

The following practice support tools may be helpful for nurses working in foot care:

- [\*Nurses Recommending and Administering Over The Counter Medications or Devices\*](#)
- [\*Medication Guidelines for Nurses\*](#)
- [\*Self-Employment\*](#)

For further information on anything contained within this practice guideline, please contact a NSCN practice consultant at [practice@nscn.ca](mailto:practice@nscn.ca).