

Practice Guideline

Foot Care

Revised: September 2017

Introduction

The [College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia \(CLPNNS\)](#), or the College, is the [regulatory body](#) for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) in Nova Scotia. The College's [mandate](#) is to protect the public by promoting the provision of safe, competent, ethical, and compassionate nursing services. The College sets, monitors, and enforces standards for entry into the profession, practical nurse education, registration, and professional conduct. The College creates [Standards of Practice](#), establishes a [Code of Ethics](#), develops and implements a [Continuing Competence Program](#), and publishes policies and [interpretive documents](#) to support the practice of LPNs in Nova Scotia.

Using this Document

Practice guidelines are documents which outline the LPN's accountability in specific practice contexts. These guidelines reflect relevant legislation and are designed to help practical nurses understand their responsibilities and legal obligations so they make safe, competent, and ethical nursing decisions. This document can be used with CLPNNS Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, and applicable practice guidelines found on the College website at www.clpnns.ca.

Professional Practice

The College supports the optimization of LPN practice within the clinical parameters defined by employers. Each LPN is accountable for conducting a self-assessment of their individual capacity and working with their employer to take the necessary steps to address knowledge gaps so they are continually prepared to provide safe, competent, ethical and compassionate nursing care.

Introduction

Licensed Practical Nurses provide basic and advanced foot care for clients in variety practice settings, including the [self-employed](#) context¹. LPNs are accountable to assess the health status of clients and provide foot care in the overall context of the client's needs. They are expected to seek out and practice using best practice guidelines. They are also responsible to assess their own continuing competence needs as they relate to foot care, and develop, implement and reflectively evaluate their learning plans to meet their educational needs.

¹ Self-employed LPNs are accountable to track their practice hours and develop a process to validate their hours (e.g., provide redacted client receipts) if selected for an annual practice hours' audit.



Suite 302, Starlite Gallery
7071 Bayers Road
Halifax, NS B3L 2C2

Phone (902) 423-8517
Fax (902) 425-6811
Toll Free in NS 1-800-718-8517

Practice Guideline

Foot Care

Revised: September 2017

Basic and Advanced Foot Care

Basic foot care is an [entry to practice competency](#) for LPNs in Nova Scotia. The knowledge required to provide basic foot care is included in the core practical nursing education program. All LPNs are authorized to provide basic foot care to clients as part of their care.

Advanced foot care is a [beyond entry level competency](#) because the additional nursing knowledge, skill and judgment required to provide advanced foot care is not included in the core PN education program. Advanced knowledge is required because clients with diseases or pathology (e.g., peripheral vascular disease or diabetes) require advanced foot care since they have a higher risk of experiencing alterations in their lower leg and foot health.

Advanced Foot Care Practice

LPNs practicing primarily in a foot care, may be required to provide nursing services to clients on the entire foot health continuum. To ensure they have the necessary knowledge, skill and judgment to provide safe and competent foot care to every client, LPNs are required to attain competence in advanced foot care *before* they can engage in the practice.

Competence in advanced foot care can be achieved by successfully completing a post-graduate program in advanced foot care². Practicing advanced foot care without completing the advanced foot care program may be considered professional misconduct and subject the LPN to discipline or liability. The responsibility of verifying the LPN's competence as it relates to advanced foot care rests with the employer and the nurse³.

Differences in the Knowledge, Skill and Judgment of Basic and Advanced Foot Care

Basic Foot Care	Advanced Foot Care
Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anatomy and physiology of the feet and lower extremities.• Common microorganisms of the feet.• Asepsis and infection control.• Complications of diabetes and its effect on the feet.	Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic foot care knowledge <i>and</i>;• Pathophysiology as it relates to chronic disease and the feet (e.g. diabetes and peripheral vascular disease);• Changes in the feet due to chronic disease(s);

² Post-graduate programs can be community college, private trainer, facility or employer based. LPNs must be in possession of documentation (certificate of completion, employer letter on employer letterhead) to validate program completion.

³ The College does not review or approve Advanced Foot Care Programs. Any LPN in possession of documentation of successful completion of an advanced foot care program may engage in its practice and is accountable to remain current and competent. The LPN is expected to perform their own due diligence when researching advanced foot care programs. There is no different classification of LPN licensure for those possessing a post-graduate certificate in advanced foot care.

Practice Guideline

Foot Care

Revised: September 2017

- Complications of circulatory impairment.
- Education of client and caregiver.

- Knowledge and application of best practices in infection control related to cleaning and sterilizing instruments;
- Footwear and basic pedorthic management.
- Education of other healthcare providers.

Skill

- Assessment and inspection of the foot.
- Performance of non-invasive foot-care procedures:
 - cleansing, moisturizing
 - application of creams, lotions, simple dressings
 - toe nail care (includes cutting)
- Education of client and caregiver.

Skill

- Basic foot care skills, **and**;
- Assessment and inspection of the foot;
- Adherence to the principles, applications and contraindications of padding,
- Operation of a rotary file.
- Perform non-invasive foot care procedures such as removal of tissue (corn, callus) at the level of the epidermis.

Judgment

- Makes practice decisions based on the assessment of the client without disease or pathology affecting the lower leg or foot.
- Takes appropriate action when assessment findings are not as anticipated.
- Documents and reports appropriately.

Judgment

- Basic foot care judgment **and**;
- Makes practice decisions based on the assessment of the client with or at high risk for disease or pathology affecting the lower leg or foot.
- Takes appropriate action when client needs exceed their individual and professional capacity, such a referring a to an appropriate health care provider.

Cutting Toe Nails

Toe nail cutting is a component of basic foot care for all clients. However, even if the client is not experiencing any lower leg or foot issues, the mere presence of certain diseases increases the risk associated with cutting toe nails.

LPNs are expected to use their professional judgment as they prepare to cut the toe nails of a client with such medial issues. The more the clients lower leg and foot are impacted by disease, the more likely the LPN **should** possess advanced foot care knowledge⁴ to prevent, anticipate or manage any complications which may be associated with cutting toe nails. LPNs should engage in learning opportunities to ensure their continued competence.

⁴ As a result of successfully completing a post-graduate program in advanced foot care.

Practice Guideline

Foot Care

Revised: September 2017

Employers, as part of ensuring the delivery of safe and competent care, may provide nurses (with and without advanced foot care knowledge) learning opportunities related to nail care and care of the client with disease or pathology affecting the lower leg and foot. Employers should have processes in place to support consultation with appropriate care providers when clients present with, or develop care issues which exceed the individual or professional capacity of the LPN.

Self-Employment

Self-employed LPNs are accountable for complying with their professional practice standards, local, provincial and/or federal legislation, as well as best practice guidelines relating to nursing, foot care and business practices.

Medication Administration for Self-Employed LPNs

Self-employed LPNs may [administer medications](#) as long as it is a condition within the scope of service which has been established with the client. In the self-employment context LPNs support clients' self-care by reviewing the plan or interventions used in the past to successfully manage their own needs.

LPNs with advanced foot care knowledge may recommend over the counter (OTC) medications or products specific to foot care for their clients provided the following:

- The client needs are known **and** the medication or product is, or has been a part of an established plan of care **and** the client's response(s) to the medication or product 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 **and**;
- The LPN has the necessary knowledge, skill and judgment (competence) to safely administer medications or educate the client about the medication or product, **and** can predict and manage the outcome of the client's response.

Clients seeking recommendations for OTC medication or products to manage issue other than those related to the lower leg and foot should be referred to an appropriate healthcare provider such as a nurse practitioner, physician or the appropriate health care service, such as 811.

Practice Guideline

Foot Care

Revised: September 2017

Resources

Code of Ethics: <http://clpnns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/IJLPN-CE-Final.pdf>

Entry to Practice Competencies: <http://clpnns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/IJLPN-ETPC-Final.pdf>

Medication Administration Practice Guideline: <http://clpnns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Medication-Administration-Final1.pdf>

Medication Administration Self-Assessment Guideline: <http://clpnns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Medication-Self-Assessment.pdf>

Medication Administration Decision Tree: <http://clpnns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Decision-Trees.pdf>

National Competencies for Foot Care Nursing (developed by the Canadian Association of Foot Care Nurses): <https://cafcn.ca/wp-content/uploads/CAFCN-National-Competencies-for-Advanced-Nursing-Foot-Care.pdf>

Standards of Practice: <http://clpnns.ca/practice-standards-and-code-ethics/>

Self-Employment Practice Guidelines: <http://clpnns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Self-Employment.pdf> .