



PRACTICE GUIDELINE FOOTCARE

The College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia (CLPNNS) is the regulatory body for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) of Nova Scotia. The mandate of CLPNNS is to protect the public and does so by establishing and enforcing requirements for entry into the profession, Standards of Practice and a Code of Ethics. Through the privilege of self-regulation, the College promotes the delivery of safe, competent and ethical care to clients through the continued competency requirements of its members. The College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia maintains that LPNs are accountable for their own practice and actions at all times.

Introduction

Licensed Practical Nurses provide basic and advanced foot care in a variety of settings including: hospitals, long term care centers, community agencies, clinics and clients' homes. LPNs providing foot care may be employed by a facility/agency or may be self-employed. LPNs are responsible to assess the health status of clients and their ability to meet their own continuing foot care needs.

Basic and Advanced Foot Care

Basic foot care is an entry-level competency for all LPNs in Nova Scotia. Basic foot care is provided to clients who do not have pathology or disease of, or affecting the feet.

When clients are experiencing (actual or potential) alterations or variations in their health as the result of pathology (such as PVD or diabetes) the **nurse requires advanced nursing knowledge, skill and judgment** to ensure her/his practice is safe, competent and ethical. Advanced knowledge comes from a post-graduate program in Advanced Foot Care.

Nurses who wish to engage in a practice that is primarily foot-care (e.g. Foot care nurse) , are required to gain competency in advanced foot care before engaging in this practice. Competency can be achieved by completing a formal post graduate program in advanced foot care from a:

- a. Community college;
- b. Private educator;
- c. Private training facility.

Supplementary Employer-Based Education in Nail Care

Nail care or cutting the toe nails for a client with known pathology of the feet/leg may be considered advanced foot care. **As such, the nurse without an advanced foot care certificate requires additional knowledge beyond basic foot care** before she/he can engage in this activity in the clinical area. Front-line nurses (whose practice includes, but is not entirely comprised of foot care), require supplementary employer-based foot care education focused on the common diseases that impact the feet and leg. It is important to note that the intent of supplementary employer-based education is to

provide the LPN with additional knowledge to support their nail care practice for clients with known pathology of the feet. Supplementary employer based education does not replace a formal advanced foot care course. Front-line nurses engaging in foot care with this client population should have completed or be in process of completing the physical/health assessment program.

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

Basic Foot Care	Advanced Foot Care
<p>Knowledge</p> <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, • Complications of circulatory impairment, • Education of client and caregiver, 	<p>Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic foot care knowledge and; • 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); • Knowledge and application of Infection Control (Health Canada's guidelines) related to cleaning and sterilizing instruments, • Footwear and basic pedorthic management,
<p>Skill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment and inspection of the foot; • Performance of non-invasive foot-care procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleansing, moisturizing • Application of creams, lotions, simple dressings • Toe-nail care (includes cutting) • Education of client and caregiver. 	<p>Skill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment and inspection of the foot; • Basic foot care skills, and; • Perform invasive foot care procedures for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of tissue (corn, callus) below the dermis • Principles, applications and contraindications of padding, • Operation of the Dremel Drill.
<p>Judgment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of the expected findings of the normal or average foot for the client who is not experiencing actual/potential alterations or variations due to disease processes; • Understanding when, and how to refer client, based on the findings of the foot/client assessment. • Documentation and reporting as necessary. 	<p>Judgment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of the findings of the normal or average and; • Recognition of the findings of the foot for the client who is experiencing actual/potential alterations or variations due to the known presence of disease; • Understanding when, and how to refer client, based on the findings of the foot/client assessment; • Documentation and reporting as necessary.

Determining Appropriate Practice Context

The College supports and encourages LPNs to optimize their practice within their professional scope of practice, clinical parameters defined by employers through policies and procedures and their individual competency. They are expected to practice in accordance with the following documents:

- The Licensed Practical Nurses Act (2006);
- The Standards of Practice/Code of Ethics, and;
- The Continuing Competency Profile.

LPNs are accountable to recognize situations where the needs of the client are beyond their individual scope of practice or competency and consult with the appropriate care provider to ensure clients receive safe, competent and ethical care (LPN Act, 2006). It is important that LPNs and employers recognize that client needs and practice context determine the right nurse to enact a skill. LPNs and employers must be able to clearly articulate clinical contexts which do and do not support the LPN to engage in foot care. Programs and education modules should contain information to assist LPNs in the determination of appropriate practice contexts. The responsibility of verifying a nurse's current and ongoing competence in relation to advanced foot care rests with the nurse and the employer.

Employers are required to have processes in place to support consultation to appropriate care providers when clients present with, or develop care issues that are beyond the practice capacities of the nurse. This applies equally to front-line nurses with supplementary employer-based education or nurses with a post-graduate certificate in advanced foot care.

Transferability of Foot Care Skills

Formal advanced foot care courses are transferable across Nova Scotia and all jurisdictions across Canada. Employed-based supplementary foot-care education is employer and practice specific and as such, **may not transfer** to other employers or jurisdictions. Employers set the practice context with policies and may require a nurse to complete a post-graduate course or an employer based program (or both), before performing foot care in their employment setting. Nurses are accountable to work with their employers to determine if additional new employer specific education is required before engaging this skill in a new workplace. CLPNNS supports an employer-based PLAR process for members moving within Nova Scotia or coming from jurisdictions outside Nova Scotia.

Self-Employment

Self-Employed LPNs are expected to follow guidelines set by CLPNNS.

References

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