

# TOUCH THE TOES TEST



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## ABOUT THE TEST

The **Touch the toes test**\* is quick and easy, designed to assess sensitivity in your feet, and can be done in the comfort of your own home.

### Why is sensitivity important?

Sensitivity is an important way that the body can alert you to other problems. Sensations, like sharp pain or throbbing, can tell you when you may have damage to a part of your body. In the case of feet, pain could be due to a burn, blister or cut and because you feel it you can take prompt action and appropriate treatment.

If sensation is impaired you may not realise if minor damage has occurred and left unknown and untreated the risk of infection is increased. Infections and ulcers are also painful – but not if that part of the foot also lacks sensation.

Knowing if you have impaired sensitivity requires you to rely more on regular visual checking for discoloration or swelling for instance.

It is important to remember that impaired sensation itself **does not cause infection** and ulceration.

Please note that the **Touch the toes test** is not a substitute for your annual foot review by an appropriately trained person.

## REFERENCE GUIDE



\*Officially known as the Ipswich Touch Test which was designed by Gerry Rayman and the team at Ipswich Hospital

## STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTION

### HOW TO PERFORM THE TEST

The test simply involves very lightly touching six toes, three on each foot as shown to find out how many of the touches are felt. Importantly the touch must be gentle, light as a feather and brief.

#### VERY IMPORTANT!

- **The touch must be light as a feather, and brief (1–2 seconds): do not press, prod or poke tap or stroke the skin.**
- **If the person did not respond do not attempt to get a reaction by pressing harder. They did not feel; this should be recorded as not felt.**
- **You must not touch each toe more than once. If not felt do not repeat the touch, there is no second chance.**

- 1 Remove socks and shoes and rest the subject with their feet laying on a sofa or bed.
- 2 Remind them which is their RIGHT and LEFT leg, pointing this out by firmly touching each leg, saying **“this is your right”** when the right leg is touched and **“this is your left side”** when the left is touched. If you face the soles of their feet their right is on your left (see reference guide, page 1).
- 3 Ask them to close their eyes and keep them closed until the end of the test.
- 4 Inform them that you are going to touch their toes and ask them to say right or left as soon as they feel the touch and depending on which foot was touched.
- 5 Perform the touch, using your index (pointing finger) as shown in the photos and diagrams.
- 6 The pictures also show which six toes should be touched and the sequence.
- 7 So, start by lightly touching the tip of the toe marked 1 (right big toe) with the tip of your index finger. The patient will respond by saying **“right”** if they feel the touch.
- 8 Record the result by circling **‘Y’** on the attached record sheet. If they did not respond, circle **‘N’**.
- 9 Now move to the toe marked 2, the right little toe, record the result, followed by the toe marked 3, the left big toe etc.
- 10 Continue until all the six toes has been checked.



## RECORDING THE RESULTS

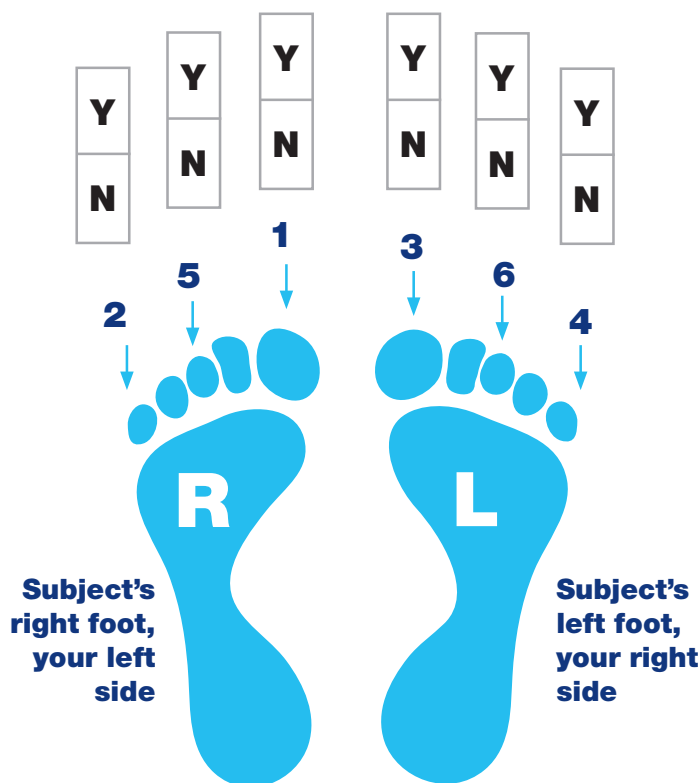
### REMINDER

Using the index finger, **touch the tips of toes following the sequence** from 1 to 6 shown in photos and drawings shown on page 2.

The touch must be **light as a feather**, and very brief (1–2 seconds): **DO NOT** press, prod or poke.

Remember: If the touch has not been felt do not press harder, and **DO NOT** try again. You can only touch each toe **ONCE**; if not felt this must be recorded by circling 'N' on the diagram right. **There is no second chance.**

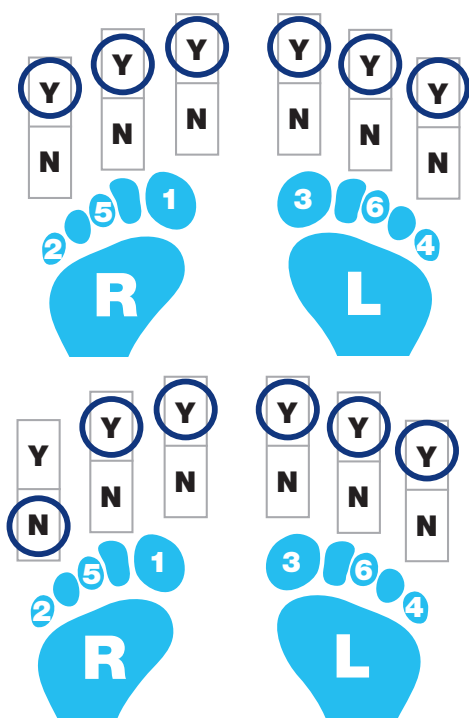
If the subject correctly says right or left, circle 'Y' on the diagram right.



## WHAT THE RESULTS MEAN AND WHAT TO DO

### NORMAL SENSATION

If you felt the touch at all six or five of the six toes, as shown in the example below, then your sensation is normal and you are **not** at increased risk of developing a foot problem because of lack of sensation. However, you must continue having the more detailed foot checks that you should be receiving annually.



### IMPAIRED SENSATION

If you did not feel when touched at two or more of the six toes, as shown in the examples below, then you are very likely to have reduced sensation and may be at risk of a diabetic foot ulcer. This needs to be confirmed by further testing. We suggest you visit your surgery and ask for a full examination of your feet. After that examination you should ask for the results of the assessment and then if it is abnormal you should be referred to a diabetes specialist podiatrist, foot protection team, or the diabetes foot clinic depending on the severity.

