

How to choose a podiatrist

What a visit should cost, when custom orthotics are worth it, and how diabetes changes the whole calculation

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Podiatry ranges from a routine nail and callus trim to serious diabetic foot care, and the price of the two is far less different than people expect. The decision that matters most is whether the custom orthotics being recommended are actually needed, because that is where a few hundred dollars turns into a thousand.

What it should cost

An initial consultation is usually about \$90 to \$160, with follow-ups about \$70 to \$120. General foot care such as nail and callus treatment often sits at the lower end; biomechanical assessment and gait analysis at the higher end.

Custom orthotics typically run \$400 to \$800 a pair, and many podiatrists also sell prefabricated orthotics at \$80 to \$200. For plenty of people the prefabricated option does the same job, and the honest practitioner will say so. If you have diabetes or another chronic condition, a GP Management Plan and Team Care Arrangements can give you up to five subsidised allied health visits per calendar year, with Medicare rebating a set amount and you paying the gap. Private health extras usually contributes and HICAPS claims the gap at the desk.

What the law requires

Podiatrist is a protected title. Podiatrists must be registered with the Podiatry Board of Australia under AHPRA. Registration confirms their qualification, insurance and adherence to the shared code of conduct, and you can check the public register free.

Some podiatrists hold an endorsement for podiatric surgery or for scheduled medicines, which extends what they can legally do. This is not the same as the title podiatric surgeon - check the register to see exactly what any practitioner is endorsed for before a surgical procedure is discussed.

Red flags

Custom orthotics recommended on the first visit before any proper assessment or trial.

No mention of diabetes or circulation status when the patient has either.

A long pre-paid package of visits sold up front.

No written treatment plan or costing.

Endorsement claims that cannot be verified on the AHPRA register.

Foot ulcers or wounds treated without referring on when they are not healing.

What good looks like

A clear diagnosis and a costed plan, with prefabricated orthotics offered when they would do.

They ask about diabetes, circulation and footwear as a matter of course.

They use a GP Management Plan for chronic conditions where it applies.

They give you a self-care routine and clear red-flag symptoms for between visits.

They refer on promptly for wounds that do not heal or signs of vascular disease.

What to ask

- "What is the diagnosis, and what is the treatment plan with a cost for each option?"
- "Do I actually need custom orthotics, or would prefabricated ones do?"
- "Are you registered with the Podiatry Board of Australia, and do you hold any endorsements?"
- "Can we use a GP Management Plan if I have diabetes or a chronic condition?"
- "What should I do between visits, and what warning signs should send me back sooner?"
- "Do you have HICAPS, and what is my gap?"
- "If I have diabetes, who else should be involved in my foot care?"

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