

Podiatrist

Join the team and make a difference

Podiatrists (formerly known as chiropodists) assess, diagnose and treat problems of the foot and ankle. They work with patients of all ages, relieving pain and discomfort, and helping them to stay mobile and independent.

What will you do?

The human foot is one of the most complex pieces of our anatomy and also one of the most important in terms of our mobility and general sense of well-being. As a podiatrist you will be assessing and providing treatment for a wide range of patients who may self-refer, or are referred by GPs, practice nurses or orthopaedic consultants. It could be someone with a sports injury, a child who has difficulties walking or running, or a patient with diabetes or arthritis.

You will need to decide whether the cause is in the bones and ligaments, or connected with poor circulation or a nerve disorder. Often there is a combination of factors. Working with the patient, you will put in place a management plan that encourages healing and limits future problems.



You will usually be working in a clinic linked to a hospital or local health centre, with frequent contact with other members of the healthcare team. You may see some of your patients only a couple of times, while others, for example those with diabetes, may have long-term conditions that mean you see them regularly.

Where will you work?	What skills and qualities will you need?
<p>You are likely to carry out therapy in one or more of the following settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hospital clinics • local clinics and health centres • people's own homes or care homes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ability to relate to a wide range of people – patients and colleagues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good communication skills
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ability to work on your own as well as in consultation with others
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • willingness to keep learning and extending your knowledge
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a responsible, professional approach

Podiatrist

Most podiatrists start in general clinics dealing with the full range of foot and ankle problems. You could then go on to specialise in an area such as sports injuries, management of patients who are at high risk of amputation, or podiatric surgery. Podiatry is a career that offers great flexibility in how you organise your work to suit the needs of patients and your own circumstances.

What entry routes are available?

To practise as a podiatrist in the NHS, you will need a BSc (Hons) degree in podiatry that is recognised by the Health Professions Council (HPC). Several UK universities offer the course and competition for places is keen.

Combining study with clinical placements, the degree programme takes three or four years to complete full time, depending on where you study, or four and a half years part time. The NHS provides financial support to eligible students on full time NHS-funded courses. For more information, visit www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students

There are also opportunities for podiatry assistants who carry out a range of foot care, such as applying dressings, showing patients how to use mobility aids or helping them with exercises. There are no formal educational requirements for this role. Assistants will be encouraged to gain qualifications in this area of work, and may be supported on foundation degree courses, which could lead to a full degree and professional qualification.

For further information, see the *clinical support worker* factsheet.

How can you develop your career?

As your clinical experience and knowledge grows, you may choose to specialise in a particular area of podiatry. Specialisms include biomechanics, working with children, or the assessment and management of high-risk patients with chronic foot problems. With further study, some podiatrists go on to undertake foot surgery using a range of procedures. There are also opportunities to become involved in research and teaching to develop the profession further.

As well as moving to more senior and specialised roles within this area, you will have the chance to take on additional responsibilities and progress within the organisation, as part of the Career Framework. For more information please see the *Careers in the allied health professions* booklet.

Pay

The national pay system in the NHS is called Agenda for Change (AfC). This applies to all staff except doctors, dentists and very senior managers. These are examples of roles and the AfC bands at which podiatrists may be paid: podiatrist (Band 5); podiatrist – specialist (Band 6); podiatrist – advanced (Band 7). To find out more about pay bands, and to see the most up-to-date salary information, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits

For more information on the range of opportunities available in the allied health professions, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/qualifications. This gives more specific details about what qualifications are necessary for each role. You can search for current vacancies and download job descriptions at www.jobs.nhs.uk

To find out more about careers in the allied health professions, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working

For more information on the professional bodies relevant to the allied health professions, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts