

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 referred by physiotherapists, GPs and 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 treatment plan that encourages healing and limits future problems.



You will usually be working in a foot 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, others, for example diabetics, may have long-term conditions that mean you see them regularly. Most podiatrists start in

Where will you work?

You are likely to carry out therapy in on or more of the following settings:

- hospital clinics
- local clinics and health centres
- people's own homes or care homes.

What skills and qualities will you need?

- the ability to relate to a wide range of people – patients and colleagues
- good communication skills
- the ability to work on your own as well as in consultation with others
- willingness to keep learning and extending your knowledge
- a responsible, professional approach.

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 degree in podiatry that is recognised by the Health Professions Council (HPC). Several UK universities offer the course and competition for places is keen.

The degree programme takes three years, full time, combining study with clinical placements. Clinical work starts in year one on most courses. Once you have your degree, you will need to register with the HPC to practice as a podiatrist.

There are opportunities also 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.

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

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 including laser treatment. There are 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 also have the chance to take on additional responsibilities and progress within the organisation, as part of the Career Framework. For more information about this initiative please see the *Careers in the allied health professions* booklet.

Pay

A new national pay system – Agenda for Change (AfC) – was introduced across the NHS in October 2004. This applies to all staff in the allied health professions except the most senior managers. These are examples of roles and the AfC bands at which they may be paid: podiatrist (Band 5); podiatrist – specialist (Band 6); podiatrist – advanced (Band 7). For more information, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits

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