



Christ  
House

HEALING AND HOPE FOR HOMELESS PERSONS

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# Day by Day



*A nursing assistant applies a stabilizing bandage to a patient's ankle and foot.*

## Helping Our Patients Put Their Best Foot Forward

**Foot care is an essential aspect of patient care at Christ House.**

In the corner of our front courtyard lies a statue of Jesus, one of the most beloved symbols of Christ House. The statue depicts Him kneeling with His hands positioned above a washing basin, looking up towards the second floor where our patients reside. The artist's work has this kneeling Jesus poised to wash the feet of our

patients, just as He washed the feet of His disciples.

This statue is not simply symbolic. In fact, foot care is a foundational aspect of patient care at Christ House. Poor foot health is a common issue in the homeless population due to the challenges of maintaining good hygiene, obtaining

properly fitting shoes, and accessing clinical services. For many individuals experiencing homelessness, foot care often falls to the last priority in

***"I'm feeling good. Now, my feet are important to me."***

***-Roger, a current patient***

the daily struggle to survive. Unfortunately, what may start as a small foot injury can quickly escalate into more dangerous, even life-threatening, infections



The mission of Christ House is to provide comprehensive and compassionate health care to sick and homeless men from the District of Columbia, and to assist them in addressing the critical issues to help them break the cycle of homelessness.

*Continued*  
or amputations.

Common foot issues seen at Christ House include foot fungal infections, frostbitten toes, and neuropathy. To address these issues, most patients receive daily foot care from our nursing staff until they can take on their own foot health.

Foot care involves washing a patient's feet with soap and water, drying them thoroughly, applying lotion to the soles, and providing nail care. Special attention is paid to the spaces between the toes, which are at higher risk for fungal growth. Throughout the process, our staff members inspect for skin openings or discoloration that may require more attention. For serious issues, a nurse may refer a patient to podiatrists or orthotic specialists.

Foot care is a top priority for our diabetic patients due to diabetes' potential to damage a person's extremities. Individuals with diabetes are especially at risk for peripheral neuropathy, which causes reduced sensation and



*A nurse washes a diabetic patient's foot while checking for signs of injury.*

blood flow in the outer limbs. This makes it more difficult for a person to notice injuries. The combination of decreased awareness and lessened blood flow can cause a small cut to turn into a massive wound in just a few days. Because of this, our diabetic patients receive daily or weekly foot care throughout their entire stay at Christ House.

"It is amazing what gentle care can do for our patients' feet," said Mari Lowe, a nurse practitioner. "Oftentimes we see patients come in with extremely dry and unhealthy looking feet, but their feet are completely transformed by the time they leave."

It is common for patients to be confused when they are first told they will have their feet cared for at Christ House. However, confusion quickly turns into amazement once they see the difference that results from just one wash.

"One patient looked at me with

tears in his eyes and said that he didn't remember the last time his feet were clean," said Caroline Gallagher, one of our Year Long Volunteer respite care assistants.

Beyond simply improving patients' physical health, foot care can also be critical to a patient's mental well-being.

Roger, a current patient, described how his attitude towards his feet changed after witnessing his healing. Roger's feet were covered in blisters when he first arrived, but now are healthy enough to tolerate compression socks after a few weeks of dedicated care.

"I'm feeling good. Now, my feet are important to me," said Roger.

Providing foot care is a simple task, but can dramatically improve a person's quality of life. Your support allows us to provide for essential needs such as dignifying foot care—a powerful way to offer healing and hope to some of the most vulnerable individuals in our city.

### ***"What can I do to take care of my feet?"***

- Look at your feet every day to check for cuts, sores, blisters, redness, calluses, or other problems. If you cannot bend over or pull your feet up to check them, use a mirror.
- Before putting your shoes on, feel the insides to make sure they have no sharp edges or objects that might injure your feet."

**Figure A. An excerpt from a patient resource on foot care.**





## A Very Christ House Christmas



Our patients and Kairos members enjoyed a month full of celebration and fellowship this Christmas season! A special note of gratitude goes out to the individuals and groups who wrapped dozens of gifts, decked the halls with fresh garland, and gave their time to make Christmas 2018 so special. Thank you for making it possible for our community to experience these beautiful holiday moments. We couldn't do it without you!





Our New Day graduates proudly stand with our Addictions Counselor and Kairos Program Director on their graduation day.

## New Beginnings

Congratulations to our first New Day graduates of 2019! These four amazing men successfully completed our New Day program, a 12 week class where patients learn and support each other on their journeys of addictions recovery. We are so proud of their hard work and dedication! As one graduate said,


***"I have come so far."***




## Looking Back at 2018


*A year of healing and hope in numbers*


Our kitchen served **49,277** meals. 

**2,374** donors gave **5,471** gifts. 


We provided care for **231** patient admissions and **10,013** patient-days. 

We consumed...  
**•2,304** pounds of bread   
**•1,920** pounds of bananas   
**•576** gallons of milk 

**3,268** volunteers served **29,689** hours. 

The average length of stay for patients was **43** days. 

**336** meal groups donated **267** meals. 

Our nurses washed **380** pairs of feet. 

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