

Feet and Beyond

A NEWSLETTER FROM A CNY DIABETES
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In this issue, we will answer the question: Can Diabetes Really Affect My Feet?

The short answer to that question is YES! Diabetes can cause any problems with the feet (no matter how small) to be exaggerated. Something that may have seemed "small" at one time like a scrape or blister from improperly fitting shoes, can lead to slow healing wounds, difficult to treat infections and even amputation. It is probable that throughout years of diabetes, people can have reduced sensation in their feet or complete numbness (a form of neuropathy). As a diabetes educator and foot care nurse, I have met many people with stories of stepping on tacks, sewing needles and glass then walked for several days not realizing their foot had been penetrated by such an item. These situations were only realized after the patient noticed drainage on their sock, and in one case was alerted by a foul odor from their foot as an infection was settling in.

Diabetes accounts for at least 80 percent of amputations not related to trauma (like having an accidental loss of limb). According to the American Diabetes Association and Amputation Prevention Alliance, almost 85 percent of these amputations are preventable with education and access to foot care. Let's review some of the most important measures to protect your feet:

1. Take steps to keep your blood sugar in control.
Sometimes people feel "OK" with high blood sugar or get used to it being high. Persistent high blood sugar is creating havoc with your circulation. Target your A1C to less than 7 percent, which means your average blood sugar should be approximately 150 mg/dl on the average.
2. Examine your feet daily for injuries you may not have felt or changes in color. Look at the tops, bottoms and

in between your toes. Please refer to the "My Self Foot Exam" video.

3. Keep your feet clean and dry. After bathing, remember to dry in between each of your toes. Contact your provider with any concerns of skin cracking from dryness
4. Protect your feet by wearing shoes and socks. Wearing socks alone is not enough! Proper footwear means cushion, support and protection for the soles of your feet. Socks alone do not offer protection from sharp items, and avoid barefoot walking at all times.
5. Do not soak your feet in hot water or use hot water bottles or plug in heaters on your feet. Do not heat towels in the microwave and wrap your feet or legs in them. Many people cannot feel how hot these items are and I have seen burns occur.
6. Stay active! Gentle activity like walking improves circulation. Make sure you are wearing good fitting shoes before you start. Even if you walk 10 minutes, three times daily around your house, it can be helpful.
7. Seek professional assistance from a podiatrist (foot doctor) if you can't reach your feet well, have very thick, crumbling or distorted growing nails. This will decrease the risk you clip your own skin.

These may seem "over" protective, but preventing a problem with the feet before it occurs will save you from a potentially devastating infection or worse. Always practice the power of prevention!

