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Diabetes Foot Facts

Complications of Diabetes:

- Diabetes can cause poor blood flow and nerve damage in the legs and feet, which can lead to the inability to feel pain. Small sores and cuts that go unnoticed can easily become serious problems if left untreated. In fact, diabetes is the leading cause of lower- limb amputations.
- More than 60% of non-traumatic lower-limb amputations in the United States occur among people with diabetes.
- In 2002, nearly 80,000 non-traumatic lower-limb amputations were performed among people with diabetes.
- Feet can show a number of diabetes warning signs and symptoms such as redness, numbness, swelling, skin feeling cold to the touch from decreased blood circulation, inflammation and any noticeable changes to the feet such as non-healing wounds or sores.

Preventing Diabetes Complications:

- Diabetes can affect many parts of the body and can lead to serious complications such as blindness, kidney damage, and lower-limb amputations. Working together, people with diabetes and their health care providers, such as a podiatrist, can reduce the occurrence of these and other diabetes complications. By controlling the levels of blood glucose, blood pressure and blood lipids, and by receiving other preventative care practices in a timely manner; people with diabetes can live life to the fullest.
- A comprehensive foot care treatment plan can reduce amputation rates by 45 to 85 percent.
- Having a family history of diabetes can increase a person's risk for developing the disease. Because diabetes is so prevalent, it is important for diabetes to become a family affair. Parents should speak openly about the disease with their children and about their potential risk of developing the disease.
- Research studies in the United States and abroad have found that lifestyle changes can prevent or delay the onset of type 2 Diabetes among high-risk adults. Lifestyle interventions included diet and moderate-intensity physical activity (such as walking for 2 ½ hours each week).

Diabetic Foot Care Guidelines

Diabetes can be dangerous to your feet – even a small cut could have serious consequences. Diabetes may cause nerve damage that takes away the feeling in your feet. Diabetes may also reduce blood flow to the feet, making it harder to heal an injury or resist infection. Because of these problems, you might not notice a pebble in your shoe - so you could develop a blister, then a sore, then a stubborn infection that might cause amputation of your foot or leg.

To avoid serious foot problems that could result in losing a toe, foot, or leg, be sure to follow these guidelines:

Inspect your feet daily. Check for cuts, blisters, redness, swelling, or nail problems. Use a magnifying hand mirror to look at the bottom of your feet. Call your doctor if you notice anything. (If your eyesight is poor, have someone else do it for you.)

Wash your feet in lukewarm (not hot!) water. Keep your feet clean by washing them daily. But only use lukewarm water – the temperature you would use on a newborn baby.

Be gentle when bathing your feet. Wash them using a soft washcloth or sponge. Dry by blotting or patting – and make sure to carefully dry between the toes.

Moisturize your feet – but not between your toes. Use a moisturizer daily to keep dry skin from itching or cracking. But DON'T moisturize between the toes – this could encourage a fungal infection.

Cut nails carefully - and straight across. Also, file the edges. Don't cut them too short, since this could lead to ingrown toenails.

Never trim corns or calluses. No “bathroom surgery” – let your doctor do the job.

Wear clean, dry socks. Change them daily.

Avoid the wrong type of socks. Avoid tight elastic bands (they reduce circulation). Don't wear thick or bulky socks (they can fit poorly and irritate the skin).

Wear socks to bed. If your feet get cold at night, wear socks. **NEVER** use a heating pad or hot water bottle.

Shake out your shoes and inspect the inside before wearing. Remember, you may not feel a pebble – so always shake out your shoes before putting them on.

Keep your feet warm and dry. Don't get your feet wet in snow or rain. Wear warm socks and shoes in winter.

Never walk barefoot. Not even at home! You could step on something and get a scratch or cut.

Take care of your diabetes. Keep your blood sugar levels under control.

Don't smoke. Smoking restricts blood flow in your feet.

Get periodic foot exams. See your foot and ankle surgeon on a regular basis for an examination to help prevent the foot complications of diabetes.