

# DIABETIC FOOT CARE INFO



- Diabetes Mellitus Disease affects many systems of the body and can develop in people of all ages.
- It is crucial for diabetics to give special attention to the care of their feet as consequences from diabetes can be severe.
- A small problem in a healthy person could become a severe one to the diabetic.
- Diabetes is a disease caused when the body does not produce enough insulin, or in which the body's insulin is incapable of performing its function.
- Insulin, a substance that comes from the pancreas gland, helps us turn the food we eat into energy or store it for future use.

## VASCULAR INSUFFICIENCY

- Vascular insufficiency is one of the most important factors contributing to infection of the lower extremities.
- Peripheral Vascular Disease warning signs:
  - a) Pain that interrupts your sleep or rest, typically relieved by having to dangle the feet over the bed or getting out of bed to walk.
  - b) Claudication or cramps in the calf or leg when walking can be a sign of decreased blood flow.
  - c) Skin Discolorations: Skin color changes vary depending on the severity of the vascular disease. Color changes range from a blue or purplish discoloration of the toes, redness of the foot when down to pallor, whiteness or loss of color when elevated.
  - d) Cold feet or shifts in temperature can be a warning sign that circulation is diminishing. Changes in nail texture or decreased amount of hair over the foot and leg.
- Inadequate Nerve Supply/Neuropathy causes decreased, altered or loss of sensation of pain, temperature and joint position. It may cause a patient to underestimate a foot problem.
- Neuropathy can also be responsible for an absence of perspiration leading to dry, cracked skin open to infection.
- In other instances, diabetic neuropathy can lead to Charcot Arthropathy, which can result in joint destruction leading to a severely deformed foot.

## FOOT ULCERS

- Diabetic patients are at increased risk of developing ulcerations because of the loss of blood supply and neuropathy.
- An ulcer is an opening of the skin with inflammation or infection.
- Any break in the skin could become an ulcer.
- Ulcers can be the result of—
  - a) Lack of sensation
  - b) Lack of blood circulation to the foot
  - c) Infection
  - d) Lack of soft tissue protection
  - e) Excessive callus tissue
  - f) Pressure caused by deformities or bony prominences
  - g) Improperly fitted shoes

## **FOOT INFECTIONS**

- Infections are common complications affecting the diabetic foot.
- A patient with diabetes has a decreased ability to fight infection.
- Treated early, an infection can usually be controlled, but if ignored, severe consequences may follow such as ulceration, bone infection, gangrene and amputation.

## **COMMON FOOT PROBLEMS MEAN HIGHER RISK**

The following common foot problems require special care:

- *Ingrown Toenail*—A nail grown abnormally into the flesh, causing more acute infections.
- *Fungus Toenails*—Dry, hard and thick toenails that may have gray, yellow or brownish discoloration. They may become thickened and separated from the nail-bed because of fungal debris.
- *Athlete's Foot*—Red, dry and cracked skin that may occur on the sides, bottom and in between the toes.
- *Corns*—Small circular hard skin located on top or the end of a toe and associated with deformity of the toe. Corns often develop as a result of pressure on deformed toes from poorly fitted shoes.
- *Calluses*—Hard, thickened skin frequently on the ball or heel of the foot.
- *Structural Weakness*—This problem causes changes in foot posture during standing or walking, and may lead to abnormal foot contact inside shoes.

## **FOOT CARE INSTRUCTION CHECKLIST**

- ✓ **INSPECT FEET DAILY:** This includes cleansing and carefully drying the feet, especially between the toes.
- ✓ **EXERCISE REGULARLY:** Walking is usually the ideal exercise for diabetics, unless complications.
- ✓ **NEVER WALK BAREFOOT:** Avoid extremes in temperature in the environment and in the home.
- ✓ **USE CREAMS OR LOTIONS:** Do not apply between the toes.
- ✓ **USE FOOT POWDER:** Apply foot powder daily between the toes.
- ✓ **CUT TOENAILS:** Toenails should be cut with the contour of your toes so they are even with the skin at the end of your toes. Do not cut into the corners or cut them short.
- ✓ **DON'T TRY HOME REMEDIES:** NEVER use razor blades, knives, scissors or medicated corn/wart removers to remedy a foot deformity on your own. This can result in injury.
- ✓ **CHECK FOR ANY CHANGES:** Redness, blisters, cuts, scratches, cracks, between toes, discoloration, swelling, discharge/drainage on socks or any other changes.
- ✓ **PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE:** Wash feet daily in lukewarm water with mild soap, drying feet gently and taking special care between the toes.
- ✓ **THINGS TO AVOID:** All actions that diminish circulation should be avoided, such as tobacco use and crossed legs. Never use a hot water soak, take extra care with exposure to the cold during the winter months, and avoid injury to the foot.
- ✓ **CHANGE SOCKS DAILY:** When they are frayed or torn discard them.
- ✓ **ALWAYS, ALWAYS discuss all foot problems** with your PODIATRIST.