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**The Diabetic Foot**

**The Importance Of Foot Care**

You are probably wondering why Diabetics have to be so careful about their feet and legs. The reason is, high blood sugars over a long period of time affect the tiny blood vessels and decrease the flow of blood. Also affected are the nerve pathways, so a person who has diabetes for over 20 years may not feel a pebble in their shoe or a small piece of glass they may step on. This is why you need to inspect your feet and in between your toes **every day.** Use a mirror to check the bottom of the feet if necessary to see your soles. Make sure there is nothing inside your shoe when you put it on. Once the skin has been broken, germs are free to enter and start an infection.

The circulatory system brings the body's defense mechanisms to the injured site. If the circulation is impaired, the healing process is not as effective. The most common foot complications are corns, calluses, infected feet, leg ulcers, and most serious, gangrene.

Simple exercises, such as walking or elevating your legs at forty-five degree angle or more, improves your circulation. It is also important to avoid crossing your legs. If you get yourself in the habit of practicing the following rules daily, you will prevent much personal hardship.

1. Bath feet daily with warm (not hot) water and a mild soap. Dry gently and thoroughly between toes. Apply a gentle skin cream or lanolin to dry skin. Vitamin A & D ointment may also be used.
2. Inspect feet daily for cuts or cracks in the skin. Signs of infection are as follows: redness, swelling, drainage, heat, or tenderness. If the skin is broken, wash and pat dry thoroughly. Do not rub. Apply hydrogen peroxide. Do not use iodine or a harsh antiseptic. Wrap the affected area with sterile gauze, placing the tape on the gauze and not on your skin. If you have a splinter or a foreign body under the skin, contact the office to arrange a prompt appointment. Do not wait for your feet to get better by themselves. Nine times out of ten they will become worse, and you may end up missing days of school or work and paying extra doctor and pharmacy bills.
3. Wear shoes and socks that fit well. A wrinkle or a hole or a raised seam in your sock, or a tight shoe, can rub and create a blister or a callus. You must avoid pressure spots. Wear clean socks everyday to assure having clean feet. Remember to break in new shoes gradually. Always avoid wearing stockings that pull your toes backwards.
4. Have your corns and calluses trimmed here at the office. Do not attempt to cut them with a razor blade. Avoid the harsh, over-the-counter, commercial remedies, which may cause a person with Diabetes further damage. Clip your toenails straight across to avoid ingrown toenails. If your nails are too thick, the doctor will use the proper instruments to reduce them.
5. Always wear shoes or hard-soled slippers. Bare feet invite injury! Keep your slippers right by the bed, so you can put them on immediately when you wake up.
6. Never use hot water or heating pads on your feet or legs. Wear warm socks. Protect your feet from sunburn. Avoid anything tight around your legs, such as too tight stocking, garters, girdles. Do not sit with your legs crossed.
7. Avoid anything that impairs circulation to your feet and legs. During the winter months, be very cautious about exposing your feet and toes prolonged exposure to the cold. Protect your skin from the cold by wearing heavy cotton socks or even two pairs of cotton socks.
8. If you also have varicose veins that require your wearing supportive hosiery, be sure they fit properly and extend up the entire leg.
9. DO NOT SMOKE! The nicotine in cigarettes causes blood vessels to constrict and therefore further decreases in circulation.
10. Strict adherence to the diet prescribed by your personal physician and taking the medications he has prescribed for control of your diabetes cannot be over emphasized. Failure to do so will only serve to harm you and uncontrolled diabetes can and often does have very serious and life threatening results.

If you are ever concerned about something you notice on your feet or any other problem concerning your diabetes and your foot care, do not hesitate to contact the office. It is better to know a problem is present and take prompt appropriate action, rather than wonder or assume and ultimately experience unnecessary hardship and discomfort.

Thank you for allowing us to assist you in the maintenance of your health!!