

Stay in Step with Your Diabetes



Diabetes is a *Family* Affair

(NU) - Nearly 21 million people in the United States are afflicted with diabetes, which accounts for 7 percent of the population. The prevalence of the disease grows even more among African Americans. In fact, approximately 13 percent of African Americans aged 20 years or older have the disease. And while diabetes is a chronic disease that can be managed, people need to be more aware of the complications associated with it.

Diabetic complications can cause nerve and vascular damage, which can eventually lead to foot ulcers. If not treated in time, these ulcers can result in amputation. In fact, more than 60 percent of non-traumatic, lower-limb amputations in the United States occur among people with diabetes.

What can you do? The American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) recommends regular visits to an APMA podiatric physician as part of a comprehensive foot care plan to help reduce your risk of amputation. Additionally, the APMA suggests following these simple tips at home.

- **Check your feet every day**

Especially if you have a loss of sensation, visually inspecting your feet daily will help you notice any cuts, sores, blisters or changes in the skin or toenails. You can use a hand mirror to help you check the bottoms of your feet. If you notice a change in your feet, see your podiatrist immediately.

- **Clean your feet daily**

Washing your feet will help avoid the buildup of bacteria. Be sure to wash in warm water, rather than hot. Completely dry your feet after washing and pay special attention to drying between the toes.

- **Keep skin healthy**

By lightly applying lotion or moisturizer to your feet, you can help prevent dry, flaky or cracked skin. Use lotion on the tops and bottoms of your feet but never between the toes because excess moisture between the toes creates conditions favorable to forming an infection.

- **Always wear shoes and socks**

Soft, lightly padded socks will help you avoid blisters and sores. Socks with no seams are best. Also, examine the insides of your shoes to be sure there is nothing harmful that will injure your feet.

- **Choose shoes that fit well and protect your feet**

One of the best ways to avoid injuries to your feet is to wear sturdy and supportive shoes at all times.

For more information on diabetes and your feet or to find an APMA podiatrist in your area, visit www.apma.org.

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