

FOOTPRINTS

AN INFORMATIONAL NEWSLETTER FOR PATIENTS OF APMA MEMBER PODIATRISTS

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SPECIAL EDITION

TODAY'S
podiatrist

MANAGING DIABETES MEANS SEEING TODAY'S PODIATRIST



With more than 30 million Americans living with diabetes, diabetic foot wounds are a problem we see all too frequently in medical practice.

People with diabetes lose what we call “the gift of pain.” They can’t feel injuries due to nerve damage caused by their diabetes. Diabetic foot wounds, left untreated, can lead to amputation, and amputations decrease both quality of life and your ability to stay active—meaning they’re also a threat to your quantity of life.

Of course, prevention is the best course of action, and prevention is all about timing. So much of proper care has to do with getting out in front of the problem. The longer you wait with an open wound, the greater the risk of it not healing and leading to an amputation. A simple, daily foot exam can identify minor injuries, sores, blisters, or other changes before they become a serious problem. Make that exam part of your routine, like combing your hair or brushing your teeth.

If you do experience a foot wound of any kind, you need to see your podiatrist immediately. A podiatrist will evaluate the wound for size, depth, and location. Your physician will also assess the blood flow to your feet. If your feet aren’t getting adequate blood flow, the tissue is not

BY DAVID G. ARMSTRONG, DPM, MD, PHD

getting enough oxygen and won’t heal well. Your podiatrist may refer you to see a vascular surgeon or other specialist. Remember: health care is a team sport, and you’re team captain.

Once we’re confident your feet have proper blood flow and we’ve controlled any present infections, we begin the work of healing the wound. It’s not what you put on the wound that heals it. It’s what you take off the wound. So, we take off any pressure you may be putting on the wound with special kinds of bracing, and we take off what is not viable—meaning we clean up the wound. The best surgery is the one we never have to do. But, if we do have to remove some dead tissue to spare your limb, we will do so.

The greatest call to action I can make is to implore you to check your feet daily and get an annual foot exam. Your doctor will never, ever be upset if you come in and see him or her with a concern and it turns out to be minor. When a podiatrist is able to deliver timely care, studies have shown we can dramatically decrease amputation and even hospitalizations. That’s good news for our health-care system and great news for you and your family. Together, we can save limbs and lives.



Dr. Armstrong is professor of Surgery at the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California.

MEMBER **APMA**
AMERICAN PODIATRIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

TODAY'S PODIATRIST IS A CRITICAL PART OF YOUR DIABETES CARE TEAM.

TODAY'S
podiatrist

Diabetes can have a significant impact on your feet, so seeing a podiatrist at least once a year is an important part of managing your condition and preventing complications. If you do experience a problem with your feet, your podiatrist is the best-qualified physician to treat it.

AS PHYSICIANS, SURGEONS, AND SPECIALISTS, PODIATRISTS RECOMMEND:

AN ANNUAL FOOT EXAM.



Today's Podiatrist is specially trained to treat conditions of the foot and ankle that are caused by diabetes, so he or she can help prevent complications before they happen.

DAILY SELF-EXAMS.

Check your feet every day for cuts, bruises, sores, or changes to the toenails, such as thickening or discoloration. If you notice a change, make an appointment to see your podiatrist.



PROFESSIONAL FOOT CARE.



Never try to treat calluses, ingrown toenails, or other foot conditions on your own. Home treatment is especially risky for people with diabetes, who could develop dangerous infections.

COMFORTABLE, WELL-FITTING FOOTWEAR.



Diabetes can cause nerve damage, or neuropathy, which is a loss of sensation in your feet. People with diabetes can injure their feet without knowing it. Podiatrists recommend against going barefoot; instead, wear well-fitting shoes and socks to protect your feet.

A TEAM APPROACH.



Today's Podiatrist will collaborate with your primary care physician and other specialists to establish the right approach for your individual needs. Podiatrists can provide a wide range of treatments, from conservative care of the skin and nails to surgical options for advanced wounds or complications involving the bones of your feet. You, your podiatrist, and your care team will determine what's right for you.

VISIT WWW.APMA.ORG/DIABETES FOR MORE INFORMATION.