

Things You Never Knew About Foot Care And Diabetes

Diabetes is a condition that tends to affect all parts of the human body. Being the most ignored appendage, more often than not, the foot tends to suffer most. Unknown to most is the fact that for those suffering with diabetes, it is imperative to care for your feet. Diabetes can lead to reduced supply of oxygen rich blood to the feet which can cause a loss of sensation and a slower healing process. There are also chances of losing feeling in the feet due to nerve damage.

Individuals with diabetes are far more susceptible to foot injuries, cuts or breaks in the skin, corns, ingrown toe-nails or even a problem in trimming the toe-nails, which can lead to ulcers. Their foot may start changing colour, shape or it might just generally become uncomfortable to walk.

Harmful consequences of high sugar levels, on your feet, can be reduced by taking control of the condition, and also by ensuring that your cholesterol levels and blood pressure are normalised. It is also recommended to quit smoking, as this has a huge impact on the blood supply to the feet.

Diabetes has steadily become a major problem here in the UAE. Thus, it is important to know as much about how to prevent, identify and manage the same. It is often minor and seemingly insignificant differences that can really help make the difference to one's health. Hence it is important to be as wary and knowledgeable as possible.

When should you visit the doctor?

It is believed that those with diabetes are also 15 times more likely to have a limb amputated due to the decomposition of tissues. Hence, maintaining the health of your feet is important, by correctly identifying the problem.

A person with diabetes needs to wear shoes with a wide space around the toe areas, to avoid getting hurt. They are also recommended to wear removable insoles for flexible fittings. The insoles need be removed and dried after each use for added comfort.

Below is a list of reasons to contact a doctor if a person with diabetes experiences some of these symptoms. It is also important to note that for most of these symptoms, a doctor should be consulted within 72 hours.

- Even the slightest trauma to the feet or legs no matter how miniscule, requires immediate medical attention. These seemingly small injuries can eventually lead to very serious infections if not treated immediately. Simultaneously, any blister, wound or ulcer smaller than one inch in diameter can become a very serious problem. It is advisable to develop a plan with your doctor well in advance so that you are not caught off guard in these situations.

- Consistent pain in the feet or the legs is often a clear indicator that all is not well. Constant pain is never something normal. At the same time, numbness in the feet or the legs can also be an indicator of diabetic nerve damage or worse still impaired blood circulation in the legs. In either case, they jeopardize the individual's health with infections and in some cases can lead to amputation.

- Challenges in walking are often a product of diabetic arthritis. It commonly occurs from an excessive strain or pressure on one's foot. Identification and early intervention is vital in preventing more serious injuries in the future like falls or worse still, skin break down and infection.

The Next Steps

Once identified the next steps are important:

- **Ask Questions:** Ask as many questions as possible about anything that one might need help in understanding. Understanding what needs to be done and the preventative measures needed is the first step to potentially avoid future scares. Follow all instructions from the Doctor or Nurse

- **Medicate:** Doctors prescribe medication for your own good. It is crucial to go through the course in its entirety. Not completing the prescribed dosage can lead to bacteria becoming resistant to the drugs in the future.

- **Improvements:** reduction in pain, swelling and warmth is usually a good sign that things are improving. Additionally a reduction in size of the wound or ulcer is also a very positive sign. The absence of fever is also quite often a great sign that the patient is on the road to recovery. It is important to keep the doctor informed of any improvements or lack thereof.

- **Be Vigilant:** During healing, vigilance is crucial. Dietary control is one of the best ways to help with healing process. This has to be scrutinised closely. Good Glycemic control not only helps the healing process, but in turn helps in the prevention of future issues. Regular sugar check-ups also greatly help.

Self-Care for your feet at Home

There are a number of ways to look after your feet while in the comfort in your own home.

- **Eliminate Obstacles:** try and keep the floor area of your residence as clutter free as possible. This reduces the risk of individuals tripping or bumping into these obstacles. Also, the key is to ensure that wherever you move about your premises, the area is always well lit.

- **Maintaining your toe nails:** Never use anything other than standard nail clippers. Individuals often use scissors as a substitute and this is extremely dangerous. It is also important to cut your nails straight across. If you experience problems it's always better to get a family member or your physician to help with this.

- **Footwear:** Wearing solid and comfortable shoes when possible are also useful in preventing unnecessary injury. Consulting a podiatrist is also good to make sure that your shoes fit properly as well as recommendations on what is the best for your feet. Individuals

with flat feet might often special medically approved prescription shoes or shoe inserts.

- **Exercise:** This is a great way to improve the health of the bones and joints and also to improve the overall circulation of the legs. Remember before starting any exercise regime to consult your physician.

- **You are in control of your disease:** Following all of the medical advice is crucial to keep your diabetes in check. These include regular blood sugar check-ups, following you diet religiously and taking the prescribed medication.

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