

## Sacred and Baptist Hospital

### Drs. Kafie, Harlin and Yonehiro

Southeast Vascular Group

5147 north 9th ave. 103

Pensacola, Fl 32504

phone 850-969-1491 or 850-434-1863

fax 850-969-1443 or 850-432-9090

## Diabetic Foot

### General Information

More than eight million people in the U.S. have diabetes mellitus, and foot problems are one of the major reasons of hospitalization for this group. It has been estimated that one of seven diabetics will develop a serious foot condition at some point in their lives. The foot problem is aggravated by loss of protective sensation caused by deterioration of the nerves of the leg. Common problems include:

- foot ulcers
- swelling
- cuts and sores
- corns
- ingrown toenail
- deep infection

If left untreated, gangrene can develop, and in severe cases, may potentially result in the amputation of a toe, foot, or leg

### Causes of the Diabetic Foot?

Problems arise in the diabetic foot because diabetic patients often experience a gradual loss of nerve function, known as neuropathy, in their legs and feet. Neuropathy usually develops slowly, and may not be noticed at first. It is difficult to detect because it is not a sensation but the absence of sensation. Cases of neuropathy can be mild or severe.

Diabetic patients who have developed neuropathy can injure their feet in several ways. Because they cannot feel the pain that a patient with fully intact nerve function would experience with the same injury, the problem may not be noticed for some time, with ulcers, deep infection, and damaged joints likely to eventually result.

Poor circulation and decreased resistance of the patient to infection can contribute to the development of such problems.

### Symptoms of the Diabetic Foot?

Patients may not report symptoms, but they may experience pain or a tingling or burning sensation, especially at night, a result of the neuropathy. The ulcers, infections, and other problems may themselves be painless.

Unsteadiness in standing and walking may occur because of loss of skin sensation and position sense.

Visual inspection of the foot will reveal swelling, redness, ulcers, bleeding, blisters, corns, or a change in the shape of the foot. The foot may also feel warmer than normal to the touch.

### Treatment

Once a problem has been identified, your doctor will take whatever steps are needed to treat it. However, in this case, it is the identification of the problem that is the stumbling block, since pain does not play the warning role that it plays for people who do not have nerve damage. Because of the absence of pain, it is crucial to take good care of your feet. Recommendations include:

- Wear good shoes
- Inspect your feet daily for blisters, cuts, sores, and other problems. Use a mirror placed on the floor to see the bottom of the feet.
- Do not go barefoot
- Avoid temperature extremes
- Do not "self-treat" corns, calluses, or ingrown toenails; see a physician immediately
- Have regular foot examinations

- . Always keep your feet warm
- . See your physician immediately if your foot is injured in any way.

**Enter Special Instructions below:**

Click **Preview Page** to reformat this page before printing. Then use the print function on your browser to print the handout.

Copyright © DynoMed.com, LLC 2002

MD Consult L.L.C. <http://www.mdconsult.com>

**Bookmark URL:** </das/patient/view/18009586/10061/7859.html/top>