

## Diabetic Ulcers

When a diabetic foot becomes numb, it may be at risk for deformity. One way this happens is through ulcers. Small, unattended cuts become open sores, which may then become infected. Another way is the bone condition Charcot Foot. This is one of the most serious foot problems diabetics face. It warps the shape of the foot when bones fracture and disintegrate, and yet, because of numbness there is no pain, and the individual continues to walk on the foot. Our practice can treat diabetic foot ulcers and early phases of Charcot (pronounced "sharko") fractures using a total contact cast and prevent more serious damage or deformity. This treatment allows the ulcer to heal by distributing weight and relieving pressure. For Charcot Foot, the cast controls foot movement and supports its contours.

If you have diabetes, you should inspect your feet every day. Look for puncture wounds, bruises, pressure areas, redness, warmth, blisters, ulcers, scratches, cuts, and nail discoloration. Get someone to help you, or use a mirror. Here's some basic advice for taking care of diabetic feet:

- Always keep your feet warm.
- Don't get your feet wet in snow or rain.
- Keep feet away from heat (heating pads, hot water pads, electric blankets, radiators, fireplaces). You can burn your feet without knowing it. Water temperature should be less than 92 degrees. Estimate with your elbow or bath thermometer (you can get one in any store that sells infant products).
- Don't smoke or sit cross-legged. Both decrease blood supply to your feet
- Don't soak your feet.
- Don't use antiseptic solutions (eg: iodine or salicylic acid) or over-the-counter treatments for corns/ calluses.
- Don't use any tape or sticky products, such as corn plasters, on your feet. They can rip your skin.
- Trim your toenails straight across. Avoid cutting the corners. Use a nail file or emery board. If you find an ingrown toenail, contact our office for treatment.
- Use quality lotion to keep the skin of your feet soft and moist, but don't put any lotion between your toes.
- Wash your feet every day with mild soap and warm water.
- Wear loose socks to bed.
- Wear warm socks and shoes in winter.
- When drying your feet, pat each foot with a towel and be careful between your toes.
- Buy shoes that are comfortable without a "breaking-in" period. Check how your shoe fits in width, length, back, bottom of heel, and sole. Avoid pointed-toe styles and high heels. Try to get shoes made with leather upper material and deep toe boxes. Wear new shoes for only two hours or less at a time.
- Don't wear the same pair of shoes every day. Inspect the inside of each shoe looking for foreign objects, protruding nails, or any rough spots inside before putting them on. Don't lace your shoes too tightly or loosely.
- Choose socks and stockings carefully. Wear clean, dry socks every day and always wear socks with shoes. Avoid socks with holes or wrinkles. Thin cotton socks are more absorbent for summer wear. Square-toes socks will not squeeze your toes. Avoid stockings with elastic tops or garters.
- Never wear sandals or thongs (flip-flops) and never go barefoot, indoors or out.
- In the winter, wear warm socks and protective outer footwear. Avoid getting your feet wet in the snow and rain and avoid letting your toes get cold.
- Don't file down, remove, or shave off corns or calluses yourself.

Contact our office immediately if you experience any injury to your foot. Even a minor injury is an emergency for a patient with diabetes.