

Focus on Your Feet!

Diabetes Month is here



By Jill Trelease, MSN, FNP-BC, CWON, CFCN

There are more than 29 million people in the United States with diabetes, and more than one million newly diagnosed diabetics each year, according to the American Diabetes Association. Unfortunately, with diabetes can come problems with your feet. Individuals can experience nerve damage and skin changes in their feet, which can lead to bigger problems. Nerve damage can affect what your foot feels: you may not sense changes in temperature such as hot or cold, you may feel a tingling or burning sensation in your feet, and you may not feel it if you injure your feet. Skin changes could include very dry skin, which may peel and crack resulting in broken skin and a wound.

Diabetes can also affect the blood flow to your feet. If your blood flow is affected, it may decrease the delivery of oxygen to your feet. Poor blood flow also means slower healing wounds.

The first step is prevention. Neuropathy (a condition which causes loss of sensation in the feet) makes it easy for a diabetic to injure their foot and not realize it. It can start out as a simple wound that may look like a blister or a small cut. Those wounds, if left untreated, can result in bigger problems such as amputation. The statistics are staggering: 60 percent of lower leg amputations (that are not a result of an accident) are in adults with diabetes.

If you are a diabetic, here are some helpful tips for good foot health:

1. Check your feet twice daily.
2. Never use lotion between your toes.
3. Consider using liquid soap instead of bar soap to keep your skin healthy.
4. Wear shoes that are fitted but not tight.
5. Keep track of your blood sugars and make sure they are in healthy ranges.

If you have developed a foot wound, Morton Hospital's Wound Center can help you heal. Our team of general surgeons, foot surgeons, a wound/foot care nurse practitioner, and wound nurses help diagnose and treat diabetic wounds. We use diagnostic testing such as the arterial brachial index (ABI) to check your blood flow. Advanced treatments, such as hyperbaric oxygen therapy and skin substitutes, are used to help heal your wounds. In addition, we provide extensive education regarding lifestyle changes, such as nutrition and footwear. Each patient is treated based on their individual symptoms and wound presentation. We have been part of the community for 10 years and look forward to helping you heal!

Jill Trelease is the Program Director for Morton Hospital's Center for Wound Healing. For more information, or to make an appointment, visit www.mortonhospital.org or call the Wound Center at 508-828-7780.