

FOOTPRINTS

An Informational Newsletter for Patients of APMA Member Podiatrists

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It's Time to Address Your Diabetes

Living with diabetes should mean enjoying life at the heart of your family. But diabetes is a serious condition. It brings with it a heightened risk of slow-healing wounds, systemic infection, and amputation. People who undergo an amputation as a result of their diabetes have a higher risk of dying within five years than people who have cancer. It's time to address your diabetes and particularly its complications in your feet.

"Asian Americans have an elevated risk of being diagnosed with diabetes," said Priya Parthasarathy, DPM, an APMA member physician and chair of the association's Communications Committee. "Combine that with a tendency to overlook self-care, and Asian women are a population at very high risk for serious complications from diabetes.

"It's so important to manage your diabetes and protect your feet," Dr. Parthasarathy said. "All too often, I see female patients who focus on their families' needs at the expense of their own health. I tell them that if they want to care for others, they need to care for themselves."



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Asian Americans face a 40-percent higher risk of being diagnosed with diabetes than non-Hispanic white Americans. Among Asian Indians, that figure skyrockets to 70 percent.



Dr. Parthasarathy suggests a few simple steps that can help you avoid complications of diabetes in your feet:

Break the cycle of unhealthy eating. Healthy food is medicine, and small changes can have a big impact for your diabetes and your family's health! Diabetes is avoidable when you establish healthy habits early on, and once you have diabetes, controlling your blood sugar through a healthy diet is key.

Get active. Get regular physical activity. This can be as simple as a walk in your neighborhood or riding bikes with your grandchildren. Just get moving!

Never go barefoot, even in your own home. Even small injuries can lead to serious infection and limb loss. If it's your tradition to take your shoes off at the door, wear supportive slippers while in the house.

Conduct a daily foot exam. Look for changes in color, temperature, hair, and nails. If you notice any changes or even minor injuries, contact your podiatrist immediately.

See your diabetes care team regularly, including your endocrinologist, ophthalmologist, and podiatrist.

You should have a diabetic foot exam with a podiatrist at least once a year, and more often if you have experienced prior complications in your feet.

Home Care

Protecting and caring for your feet at home is your first line of defense against foot-related complications from your diabetes. But not all home care is created equal! Dr. Parthasarathy shared some home care dos and don'ts to keep you on your feet!

Do conduct a daily foot exam to check for any changes in your feet or even minor injuries. If you find it difficult to reach your feet, you can use a mirror or ask a family member for help.

Don't try to address problems with over-the-counter cures or bathroom surgery! Diabetes can damage the nerves in your feet, causing you to lose sensation. It's easy to injure yourself when you can't feel pain. If you notice a problem with your feet, visit a podiatrist.

Do keep your feet clean and moisturized. Wash your feet daily, dry them carefully (including between the toes), and moisturize to avoid dry or cracked skin.

Don't count on cure-all balms. Pain or discomfort in your feet is a warning sign, and injuries or changes to your skin are more serious when you have diabetes. Don't risk a serious wound or infection. Check in with a podiatrist when you notice a change in your feet.



Dr. Parthasarathy is a podiatric physician and surgeon in practice with Foot & Ankle Specialists of the Mid-Atlantic in Silver Spring, MD.