

**Keeping
Your**



**Diabetic
Feet
Healthy**



Dr. Neal A. Marks



Dr. Heather Craig

Since 1990, Dr. Neal A. Marks has been providing foot care to residents on the east side of Cleveland, a practice that expanded to the county's western suburbs in 1991.

Dr. Marks is board certified by the American Board of Podiatric Surgery and is a Fellow of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons.

Working with Dr. Marks is Dr. Heather Craig, who is board certified by the American Board of Podiatric Surgery.

These professional podiatrists provide complete diabetic foot care, and offer a complete line of extra depth and molded diabetic shoes with accommodative insoles.

"Proper foot care is essential for a diabetic patient," Dr. Marks explained. "Many of these patients show mild to severe nerve damage, causing diminished feelings in their feet. A cut, scratch or break in the skin may not be noticed and may lead to serious problems and infection. We are here to prevent that!"

In addition to providing excellent care for diabetics with foot problems, the doctors also treat ingrown toenails, sports injuries, fractures of the foot and ankle, swollen feet, foot and ankle ulcers, skin and nail fungus and heel spurs, among other foot problems.

Laser treatment for toenail fungus is also available as an office procedure. For more information on laser treatment, visit our website, OHIOFOOTLASER.com

Patients should see their primary doctor or endocrinologist for proper diabetic management.

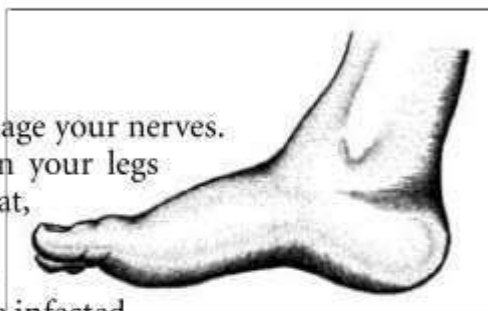
WHAT IS DIABETES AND WHY DOES IT AFFECT MY FEET?

You are not alone with your diabetes! Almost 26 million people in the United States –adults and children – have diabetes.

It is a condition in which the body is not able to regulate levels of glucose (sugar) in the blood, resulting in too much glucose being present in the blood. When the body is unable to regulate that level of glucose, diabetes occurs.

But why my feet?

Uncontrolled diabetes can damage your nerves. If you have damaged nerves in your legs and feet, you might not feel heat, cold or pain. If you do not feel a cut or sore on your foot, the cut could get worse and become infected.



The muscles of the foot may not function properly because the nerves that make the muscles work are damaged. This could cause the foot to not align properly and create too much pressure in one area of the foot.

Because diabetes affects the flow of blood, it takes longer for a sore or cut to heal. If you have an infection that does not heal because of poor blood flow, you are at risk for developing ulcers or gangrene (the death of tissue due to a lack of blood).

Problems with the feet are evident in 30% of people older than 40 who have diabetes!

There are things you can do yourself, but more important are the things a podiatrist can do for you.

WHY DO I NEED TO SEE A PODIATRIST?

If you are diabetic, and want to keep your feet healthy, your podiatrist can play an important role in teaching you how to inspect your feet and look for problems. Most important, your podiatrist can immediately recognize potential problems and work with you to provide the necessary treatment and care.

At your initial visit, your podiatrist will check the condition of your feet. This is not only a physical evaluation and foot exam, but a time at which a medical history is taken. In some cases, x-rays or other tests may be done which can help point out problems beneath the skin that you cannot see or feel.

As part of the medical history, your podiatrist will ask about your overall health and about any history of foot problems. He or she will ask about your diabetes, including whether your blood sugar level has changed over time.



It's important to let the doctor know about any medications you take, and don't forget to tell him or her about any supplements, skin ointments or herbal remedies you may take.

The foot exam itself checks the condition of different parts of your foot, beginning with an examination of your skin and nails for any signs of infection.

Feeling for the pulses in each foot checks blood flow. You may also be asked to walk a short distance so your podiatrist can check for bone, joint and muscle problems.

It's possible that even after these initial tests, the podiatrists may suggest additional tests to learn more about your feet.

These could include:

- ✓ Doppler tests and/or vascular testing used to measure blood flow in the feet and lower leg
- ✓ X-rays which can show bone or joint problems
- ✓ Imaging tests, such as MRI, bone scan or CT scan to help show and identify bone infection
- ✓ Nerve test to determine how sensitive your feet are

Based on the evaluation, the doctor will create a foot care program for you. It may be as simple as starting a daily self-care routine and having regular checkups. If needed, minor foot problems can be treated at that time.

It is possible that surgery may be needed in some cases to treat an infection. Surgery may also be suggested to keep certain foot problems from getting worse.



Make sure you see your podiatrist as often as directed and follow the directions you get to care for your feet at home.

Foot problems develop quickly, so be sure to follow the podiatrist's directions for regular foot care. Regular checkups also make it easier to find and treat small foot problems before they grow into big foot problems.

WORKING WITH YOUR PODIATRIST

It is critical that you pay attention to your feet. A podiatrist not only can help ensure your feet are OK, but also can help catch signs of arthritis and nerve and circulatory disorders, all of which can be detected in the feet.

That is why one of the most important things you can do is to listen to your podiatrist, who will recommend regular checkups. Schedule your next appointment before you leave your current one.

Your doctor will work with you so you know how to inspect your feet and look for warning signs, which include:

- Redness with streaks, or color changes in your feet
- A blister or sore on your foot
- Severe or increasing foot pain
- A burning sensation that gets worse
- Increased swelling in your feet
- Drainage on your sock

If you have any of these signs, contact your podiatrist right away. It is our policy to attend to the immediate needs of our diabetic patients. We will place any diabetic patient on that day's schedule, or as soon as the next appointment becomes available.

Waiting one day can lead to complications, which is why we can be contacted on weekends or evenings through our answering service.

As has been indicated, diabetes can sometimes make it harder for the body to heal properly. That's why even a minor foot problem, from a blister to an ingrown nail, can become infected.

Left untreated, infection can spread and damage nearby tissues and can even become life-threatening.

That's why it's so important to maintain regular contact with your podiatrist.

If he or she finds a minor infection, you'll be started on a treatment program. The goal is to heal the infected area while keeping the infection from spreading.

Your podiatrist will examine and clean the infected area. If medications are prescribed, take all of them even if the infected area begins to look better. If you don't, the infection may spread. Even with antibiotics and other treatments, a foot infection may take a long time to heal. Be sure to keep your follow-up appointments to help ensure complete recovery.

It's also a way for your podiatrist to make certain you are healing properly.

Your condition may require use of special shoes or shoe inserts to prevent serious foot problems. Your podiatrist may be able to let you know if you qualify for some insurance coverage on these items.

Americans view their feet as the least important body part pertaining to their health and well-being. However, feet were named the number one body part to experience pain, even more so than the teeth or skin.

That survey was not conducted among people with diabetes, but was a normal sampling of those 18 and older, who did not have the chronic disease. Consider how much worse those foot problems can be for people like you, with diabetes.

So, if you have a foot problem, waiting a "few days to see what happens," is not an option. See your podiatrist as quickly as possible.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MYSELF?

As important as seeing the podiatrist is, there are some things you can do to help yourself.

The first thing is to set a regular daily schedule to check your feet and begin taking care of your feet today.

Check for cuts, sores, and red spots, swelling or infected toenails.

Make sure to call your podiatrist right away if a cut, blister or bruise on your foot does not begin to heal after one day.

Wash your feet every day in warm, not hot water.

Trim your toenails with clippers after you wash and dry your feet. If your nails are thick or yellowed, or if your nails curve and grow into the skin, have your podiatrist trim them.

If you have trouble cutting, or reaching, your nails, the podiatrist can trim them for you. Most insurance companies allow for payment for these services.

After your bath or shower, file corns and calluses gently with an emery board or pumice stone.

Keep the skin soft and smooth by rubbing a thin coat of skin lotion, cream or petroleum jelly on the tops and bottoms – not between your toes – of your feet.

Wear shoes and socks at all times, and do not walk barefoot, even indoors.

We have many foot care products for use that can be purchased in our offices. We can recommend products that are appropriate for you.

Make certain you have the proper footwear. Shoes with pointed toes or high heels are a “no-no” because they cause too much pressure on your toes. The doctor may recommend special shoes or inserts to help prevent specific foot problems. The correct shoe is a comfortable one that allows you to wiggle all your toes.

Check the insides of your shoes before you put them on to be sure the lining is smooth and that there are no objects in them.

Keep the blood flowing to your feet. You can do this by putting your feet up when you are sitting, wiggling your toes and moving your ankles up and down and in and out. Don't cross your legs for long periods of time, and don't wear tight socks.

Walking, swimming or bicycling are good forms of exercise that are easy on the feet. Running and jumping can apply undue stress to the foot. Talk to your podiatrist about what exercise program may be right for you.

And as any doctor, podiatrist or not, will tell you — STOP SMOKING!



RECOGNIZE YOUR FOOT PROBLEMS

Anyone can have corns, blisters or other foot problems. If you have diabetes and your blood glucose stays high, these problems can lead to infections.

Corns and calluses are thick layers of skin caused by too much rubbing or pressure on the same spot. And, don't cut them. Either way, they can become infected.

Blisters can form if shoes continue to rub over the same spot. Wearing shoes that do not fit properly or wearing shoes without socks may increase your risk of blisters, which can become infected.

Ingrown toenails occur when an edge of the nail grows into the skin. The skin can get red and infected. Ingrown toenails can happen if you cut into the corners of your toenails when you trim them. You can also get one if your shoes are too tight.

Bunions form when your big toe deviates toward the smaller toes and a prominence occurs over the big toe joint. Typically this condition is inherited but can be aggravated by shoe styles, such as high heels.

Plantar warts are caused by a virus and they usually form on the bottoms of the feet.

Hammertoes occur when a foot muscles gets weak. Diabetic nerve damage may cause this weakness. The weakened muscles make the tendons in the foot shorter and makes the toes curl under the feet. The feet can change their shape and sores may form on the bottoms of the feet and the tops of the toes. Hammertoes can cause problems with walking and may make it difficult in finding proper fitting shoes.

Dry and cracked skin can be worse with diabetic patients due to a variety of conditions. Dry skin can become cracked and allow germs to enter the skin and cause an infection. The podiatrist can recommend over-the-counter or prescription products that are appropriate for your skin.

Athlete's foot is a fungus that causes itchiness, redness and cracking of the skin. As indicated above, cracks allow germs to get under the skin and cause infection. Your podiatrist can prescribe products to properly treat this condition.

SOME IMPORTANT DOS/DON'TS

What to Do!

- ✓ Check before putting on shoes for any potential irritants inside
- ✓ Check the soles of your shoes before putting them on for imbedded objects. Remove any imbedded objects immediately
- ✓ Keep your toenails short and cut them straight across to prevent ingrown toenails
- ✓ Do be careful when trimming your toenails not to cut yourself
- ✓ Wear thick, smooth-fitting socks and stockings. Avoid mended socks or those with seams that could cause blisters
- ✓ Stay active. Exercise, including walking, is good for your feet
- ✓ See your primary doctor/endocrinologist for regular diabetic management

What Not to Do!

- ✗ Don't use a heating pad or hot water bottle on your feet for any reason
- ✗ Don't use medication on your feet unless your **podiatrist** has approved it
- ✗ Don't cross your legs for long periods since this can compress blood vessels
- ✗ Don't wear tight garments that may restrict blood flow to your feet
- ✗ Don't cut corns or calluses since you may invite infection
- ✗ Don't go barefoot, even inside your home. A minor cut or scratch that goes unnoticed could lead to a serious infection
- ✗ Don't smoke. Don't drink alcohol. Smoking can lead to circulatory problems and alcohol can contribute to disease of the nervous system. (And, you know smoking is bad for you, and those around you, in many other ways.)

*Professional Diabetic Foot Care Can
Be A Life-Saving Procedure*

Your Professional Foot and Ankle Specialists are Here to Help



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