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Diabetic Neuropathy

People with uncontrolled diabetes are at risk for complications. Foot-related problems is one such important complication and it can vary from simple foot infections to critical condition like gangrenous (dead tissue) foot ulcer which may require even amputation. It is one of the commonest causes of non-traumatic foot amputations.

What is the relationship between diabetes and foot?

Uncontrolled Diabetes, in the longer run, can affect nerves, blood circulation, muscle and also bony structures of foot.

What is diabetic neuropathy?

Diabetic neuropathy is nerve damage from high blood sugar levels in people with diabetes and nerves throughout the body can be affected. People with poor glucose control and who have had diabetes for a long time are at highest risk for nerve damage.

What are the symptoms of diabetic neuropathy?

Diabetic neuropathy can affect limbs, as well as internal organs. The most common type of neuropathy affect the nerves in your feet and hands. It can affect the sensitivity, and sometimes, movement of your limbs.

Symptoms include:

- Pain, tingling, and burning
- Numbness and loss of feeling
- Muscle weakness
- Skin ulcers (open sores)

Because of loss of sensation, people could injure their feet and not be aware of it. Untreated foot injuries can lead to ulcers and infections. Although neuropathy commonly affects limbs, less commonly it can cause other issues like bladder or bowel problems.

How is diabetic neuropathy diagnosed?

Having annual diabetic checks are very important to identify problems early. Your doctor will ask about your symptoms and do a physical examination. The doctor will check for loss of sensation in your feet through different methods. Your doctor will also make sure you don't have other conditions, such as blood flow problems in your feet.

When to see your doctor?

As early as possible if one has

- Numbness or pain in your feet, legs, hands, or arms
- An ulcer (sore) on your foot or leg that isn't healing
- A foot or leg infection

What treatments are available for diabetic neuropathy?

Good blood glucose control without any significant fluctuations in blood sugar levels can prevent further nerve damage. Your doctor may prescribe medicines for pain that occurs with some types of nerve damage, and also suggest certain vitamins if needed. Treatment of wounds involve antibiotics, dressings, appropriate footwear and non-weight bearing methods.

How can you prevent problems from diabetic neuropathy?

The best way to prevent damage is to keep your blood glucose level under good control. You can do so by eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and reaching a healthy weight. Avoiding smoking and limiting alcoholic beverages can also help. Your doctor or diabetes educator can help you plan your healthy lifestyle.

What are the tips for good foot care?

You also can do a lot to prevent leg ulcers and amputations. Protect your feet by

- Inspecting them daily looking for blisters, calluses, bruises, redness, swelling, cracked skin, sores, or cuts.
- Cut your nails once a week or as needed.
- Apply lotion over dry skin but not between your toes
- Always Inspecting ones foot wear & always wear shoes (or slippers) with clean and dry socks
- Choosing right shoe and size that are comfortable and fit well
- Seeing a podiatrist (foot specialist) for foot care might help