



Fact Sheet

Diabetics Know Little About Preventable Measures To Reduce Amputation

The Wound Healing Center at Weiss Offers Diabetic Foot Care Tips

A recent survey reveals that one out of two Americans with diabetes have never heard of, or know little about, diabetic foot ulcers, a preventable and treatable condition that contributes to many of the 86,000 non-traumatic lower limb amputations performed each year.

According to the American Diabetes Association, up to one in four people with diabetes who get a foot ulcer will eventually require a lower limb amputation. After an initial amputation, the chance of another amputation within three to five years can reach 50 percent. The National Institutes of Health reports that the five-year mortality rate after one or more lower extremity amputations is 39 to 68 percent.

A survey of 500 adults with type 1 or type 2 diabetes revealed that 26 percent had never heard of diabetic foot ulcers, and another 21 percent said they did not know very much about them.

Called "Diabetes and Your Feet," the online survey was conducted by Harris Interactive for the American Podiatric Medical Association and Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceutical, Inc. (APMA).

The "Diabetes and Your Feet" survey, which averaged 14 minutes in length, was conducted on line by Harris Interactive with 500 adults with type 1 and type 2 diabetes between February 14 and 21, 2002.

"The fact that so many people with diabetes know so little about diabetic foot ulcers is troubling." Said Dr. Vincent Giacalone, a member of the American Podiatric Medical Association's Diabetes Advisory Board. "If more people knew how to recognize the signs of diabetic foot ulcers and got proper treatment immediately, before an infection can start in, many amputations could be avoided. Good wound care, keeping weight off the foot and prescription medications can increase the chances of healing the wound."

Even when diabetic foot ulcers don't lead to amputations, they can take a long time to heal, especially when not detected early. In addition, they can seriously impact a

patient's life during the healing process. Many of those surveyed (42%), who had been treated for a diabetic foot ulcer, said their foot ulcer took up to six months to heal. And an equally large number described the foot ulcer or its treatment as having a very big impact on their ability to do every day activities, such as walking and shopping.

“Many patients can get disheartened when they see that their foot ulcer is not healing quickly,” said Dr. Giacalone. “They need to know that it may take weeks or even months for a foot ulcer to heal, and if you or your healthcare provider don't see signs of healing, you should discuss prescription products that can help the healing process.”

Many Don't Inspect Their Feet or Get Regular Foot Exams

The survey revealed that many people don't follow proper care, like inspecting their feet every day and getting regular foot exams. Specifically, the survey found that:

- 39 percent do not examine their feet daily (experts recommend that patients with diabetes perform a simple, visual check of their feet every day for cuts, bruises, sores, or swelling).
- 40 percent of those that examine their feet won't get their blister or cut checked out unless it was causing them pain (people with diabetes may not have normal ability to feel pain and should report to their physician any sore or blister that doesn't begin to heal immediately).

For more information about diabetic foot ulcers and wound care, please contact the Wound Healing Center at Weiss, at (773) 564-6075.