

Diabetic Ulcers Linked to Foot Structure Abnormalities

Bone structure abnormalities and impaired foot and ankle biomechanics in diabetic patients are key risk factors for development of serious ulcers in the big-toe area, according to research reported in a recent study.

Diabetic patients with neuropathy, a common complication of the disease which causes loss of sensation in the feet, should be screened for certain biomechanical problems, such as limited ankle and big-toe mobility.

Identifying and monitoring diabetes patients with pre-existing foot problems early in the course of the disease could improve the success of treatment for foot ulcers and lower the incidence of recurrence, infection and amputation. This study demonstrates the importance of recognizing biomechanical and structural abnormalities that make diabetic patients more susceptible to ulcerations which commonly lead to infection and amputation.

Structural and biomechanical problems often are overlooked when health care providers treat patients with diabetes. The more immediate concerns about infection, poor circulation and wound dressings overshadow the underlying cause of many of diabetic related ulcers or wounds. While neuropathy also is a concern, it is irreversible. Therefore, the structural and biomechanical abnormalities must be addressed to heal the wound and prevent recurrence.

Those with diabetic neuropathy and biomechanical problems should wear therapeutic shoes or orthotic inserts as prescribed by a foot and ankle specialist to reduce pressure. In some cases, however, surgery might be required to prevent or heal ulcers. Ask us what shoe is best for you and your specific foot type. Remember, if you are a diabetic, you can't depend on something hurting before you start paying attention. Have your feet examined regularly in order to prevent devastating consequences.

Jonathan Moore DPM, MS