

## **The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Urges Routine Foot Exams For Diabetes Care**

All diabetic patients **MUST** make sure their physicians check their feet during every office visit for signs of ulcerations that, left untreated, can lead to infection and ultimately result in lower limb amputations.

Most diabetic patients are vulnerable to foot ulcerations caused by poor blood circulation in the lower extremities and neuropathy that inhibits nerve sensation. Ulcers are the leading cause of foot amputations among people with diabetes and they are preventable in most cases if doctors routinely check their patients' feet.

It is tragic when patients present to our office with an amputation that could have been prevented by regular, two-minute foot exams.

It is estimated that more than 86,000 lower extremity amputations are performed in the United States every year on patients with diabetes. More than 70 percent of them are caused by foot ulcerations that deteriorate to deep tissue infection, tissue necrosis and gangrene.

In foot exams, patient's should be checked for nerve sensation, skin irregularities (corns, calluses, punctures and areas of redness), swelling, drainage, and foot deformities that cause unnatural pressure points that are prone to ulceration.

In cases of deformities such as bunions and hammertoes, diabetic patients should consult a podiatric surgeon to determine the best treatment option to reduce possible downstream risk for ulceration, infection or amputation.

Individuals considered at high risk for foot ulcers should have their feet checked every two to three months, but all diabetic patients should be checked at least twice a year.

It doesn't take long for infection to worsen and ulcers to occur without the patient being aware that anything is wrong. Diabetes carries an enormous health care burden, but being diligent about foot care is a prudent and simple way to avoid one crippling complication of this disease.