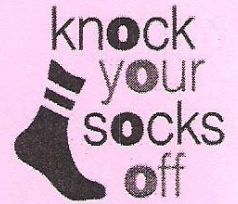


Frequently Asked Questions Diabetes and the Feet



The human foot has been called the mirror of health and podiatrists are often the first doctors to see signs of systemic conditions, particularly diabetes. But all too often patients forget to ask their primary care physicians to “knock their socks off” and check their feet. Thirteen million people suffer from diabetes, but a whopping 5.2 million are undiagnosed. That’s why it’s important, whether you have diabetes or not, to know what signs and symptoms of diabetes you should be on the look out for and to have your feet checked **every** time you visit the doctor’s office.

**American Podiatric
Medical Association**
9312 Old Georgetown Road
Bethesda, MD 20814
Telephone 301.571.9200
Telephone 800.FOOTCARE
Facsimile 301.530.2752

www.apma.org

1. Why should I ask my doctor to “knock my socks off”?

Feet do more work than most parts of the body, so it only makes sense to have them checked as often as you do the rest of your body. And since the feet are said to be mirrors of our general health, it’s especially important to remind your primary care physician, who sees you on a regular basis, to check for any signs of diabetes or other diseases that often show up in the feet first.

2. Is it normal for my feet to hurt?

Foot pain is not normal and is often a sign of a more serious medical problem. It is a misconception that foot pain is something that everyone suffers from and many people don’t realize that foot problems can often be treated easily and with a high rate of success. You should see your podiatrist if you experience anything abnormal.

3. I have been diagnosed with diabetes. Should I be worried about the bunions and hammertoes that I’ve been living with?

Bone deformities such as bunions and hammertoes are usually progressive and your podiatrist may recommend correcting them before they get severe. Bone deformities can cause ulcers (sores) that may lead to severe infections and even amputation. Many podiatrists feel that it is better to correct those deformities while your diabetes is under control, earlier in life.

4. How long does it normally take for a sore to heal?

Healthy individuals can expect a sore to improve daily. Sores that do not improve or worsen over time should be evaluated by a podiatrist and may be a symptom of other conditions. Pressure, infection and bone deformities can all contribute to sores, or ulcers, and may need to be addressed in order for the ulcers to heal.

5. Will my nails continue to grow ingrown?

Some ingrown nails are a result of leaving a spicule in the skin and will not be a problem once that spicule is removed. However, if a nail grows curved and ingrown it will likely continue to grow that way because the root of the nail is telling it to do so. Your podiatrist may recommend a permanent removal of that portion of the nail to prevent the ingrown part from returning. Untreated ingrown nails can cause infections that can be severe for a person with diabetes.