

An estimated 30.3 million people in the United States have diabetes, including 7.2 million who are unaware they are living with the disease.

The percentage of adults with diabetes increases with age, reaching a high of more than 25% percent among those aged 65 years or older. In addition to age, risk factors for diabetes include diet, activity level, obesity and heredity.

Complications from diabetes can be severe. One of those complications includes diabetic foot ulcers.

“Typically many times it will start off as a callus, we get some abnormal pressure that forms, because that patient might not have adequate circulation or limited sensation,” said Dr. Marc Leonard, Medical Director, OSF St. Joseph Wound Care Clinic. “That ulcer can create some depth and start to erode the skin underneath that pressure point or callus. So then ultimately the ulcer is the hole or sore in the foot, and many times we see them primarily in diabetics because of the risk factors associated with diabetes.”

High blood sugar levels, poor circulation, immune systems issues, nerve damage, and infection may contribute to a non-healing diabetic foot ulcer.

Approximately 15% of people living with diabetes will develop a foot ulcer, and an estimated 14-24% of people with foot ulcers will experience an amputation.

“Neuropathy, that lack of sensation, is really the number one risk factor for ulceration leading to potential bone infection, and really that’s just the beginning of it, because many of our diabetics have poor circulation, so there’s poor blood flow,” said Dr. Leonard. “Once you combine an open sore with an infection and poor blood flow, it can be very difficult to manage.”

According to Dr. Leonard, the best treatment for diabetic foot ulcers is early detection and intervention. Dr. Leonard recommends the following to help prevent diabetic foot ulcers:

- Stop smoking immediately
- Comprehensive foot examinations each time you visit your healthcare provider (at least four times a year)
- Daily self-inspections of the feet, or have a family member perform the inspection
- Regular care of the feet including cleaning toenails and taking care of corns and calluses
- Choose supportive, proper footwear (shoes and socks)
- Take steps to improve circulation such as eating healthier and exercising on a regular basis

The OSF Saint Joseph Wound Care Clinic offers advanced therapies to patients suffering from chronic wounds like diabetic foot ulcers, including Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy, Total Contact Casting (TCC), and Negative Pressure Wound Therapy. These specialized wound care therapies can aid in wound closure, new tissue growth, wound tissue regeneration and much more.

To learn more about the OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Wound Care Clinic, click [here](#) or call (309) 661-6230.