

Diabetes and Foot Health

November is National Diabetes Awareness Month – a time designed to raise awareness about both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes.

An estimated 30.3 million people in the United States (9.4 percent of the population) 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 25.2 percent among those aged 65 years or older.

“Diabetes effects the whole body,” said Teresa Mejorado, Physician Assistant at the OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Wound Clinic. “It effects the eyes, kidneys, and for us we focus a lot on ulcers, especially diabetic foot ulcers.”

In addition to age, Mejorado says risk factors for diabetes include diet, activity level, obesity and heredity. High blood sugar levels, poor circulation, immune systems issues, nerve damage and infection may contribute to a diabetic foot ulcer.

Approximately 25 percent of people living with diabetes will develop a foot ulcer. As many as 40 percent of people with a healed diabetic foot ulcer will develop a new ulcer within a year. An estimated 14 to 24 percent of people with foot ulcers will experience an amputation. An amputation results in decreased quality of life, increased medical costs and a significantly higher risk of mortality.

“It’s where foot care is very important, especially for people with diabetes,” Mejorado explained. “Because even just a little bit of pressure – they can’t feel things as well – so they can develop an ulcer with a stone in their shoe, a mis-fitting shoe. So it doesn’t take much and once they get the ulcer it can be hard to treat.”

Early detection and intervention can help to mitigate the possibility of limb loss. Mejorado 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

Proper wound care is imperative to healing diabetic foot ulcers. 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.