

Winter Weather can be Dangerous for Diabetics

For people living with diabetes, foot care is paramount. Minor issues can turn into serious infections and lead to major complications or even amputation.

Diligent foot care is even more important in the winter months, when cold temperatures and slushy sidewalks can make keeping feet healthy an even bigger challenge.

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Dr. Marc Leonard, OSF HealthCare Podiatrist

“We know they can be exposed to cold temperatures in some situations. That can lead to some unforeseen circumstances, whether that be blistering of the toes, in some cases even frostbite. So we want to make sure that they are very aware of really controlling the environment that their feet are in.”

Some foot care tips from Dr. Leonard include choosing footwear that fits properly and also provides protection from cold, snow and ice. He also says the shoe or boot shouldn't be too tight, to allow proper blood flow to the feet.

Dr. Leonard says one of the most important things diabetics should do, no matter the season, is a daily foot inspection to check for any breaks in the skin, changes in color or other abnormalities. He says these checks can keep minor issues from becoming serious complications.

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“If we can get to those and prevent them, it makes life a lot easier for both the patient and their outcome. So the early assessment and evaluation and treatment many times can prevent these things from progressing and turning into major concerns.”

While focusing on the feet is important, keeping blood sugar levels in check needs to be a top priority as well. Diabetics should keep their blood sugar levels within the range recommended by their doctors, and follow their health care providers' advice regarding nutrition, exercise and medication.

Dr. Leonard sees patients in Bloomington, Pontiac, Pekin and Streator, Illinois.