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5 QUESTIONS WITH DR. JEFFREY FREDERICK

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The Berkley-based podiatric surgeon and president of the American Academy of Podiatric Practice Management says that November — National Diabetes Month — is a good time to remind all people — especially diabetics — of the importance of proper foot care.

Q: Why is foot care especially important for diabetics?

A:One of the risks of diabetes is having to have your leg or foot amputated. It results from two factors. The disease limits the circulation, and it diminishes your sense of touch and feeling. If you or I stepped on a sliver, we'd feel it. But with a [diabetic](#), he could step on a sliver and not feel anything. The smallest thing can become a big issue, and you're not even aware of it.

Q: What should diabetics do to avoid problems?

A:Always wear socks and, in the winter, wear heavy socks. Never go barefoot. Wash and dry feet daily. [Moisturize](#) your feet to prevent and reduce drying and cracking. Look at your feet or have someone look at your feet daily to see if there are any abnormalities. Wear properly fitting comfortable shoes. Go in at least annually for a comprehensive foot exam.

Q: What are the first signs of a problem?

A:Numbness or tingling in the foot. I've heard people say it feels like they are wearing socks when they're not. That's probably a sign that you have diabetes. If you notice that, I'd say you need to be tested immediately. Another sign is severe dryness of the legs and feet. Vitamin B complex is showing a lot of promise in regenerating the nerve endings that are responsible for diabetics losing their feeling. I'd say I've seen 50/50 success with the percentage of patients getting some relief with that.

Q: Why are older people more prone to foot problems?

A:As we age, everybody's feet go through changes. If they have problems, such as bunions or other diseases, the diseases progress if unchecked. The other thing that happens is that the gait patterns change as people age, especially in the 70s and 80s. You see balance issues and shuffling.

Q: What should everyone do to properly care for their feet regardless of whether they have diabetes?

[b]A: [\[/b\]](#)All people, especially diabetics, need to have a daily fitness plan. The most common problem of non-diabetics is yellow thick fungal infection of the toenails. If you notice that, you need to get it professionally treated at the first sign of trouble. My other suggestion, and this is for [women](#) more than men, you need to think of comfort more than fashion when purchasing shoes.