



spotlight on health

Proper Foot Care Vital For Those With Diabetes

(NAPSA)—If you have diabetes, taking good care of your feet can truly be a step in the right direction.

Many Americans afflicted with diabetes don't know that the disease can damage nerves in the legs and feet, which, without treatment, can lead to amputation. "If you have diabetes or are at risk for the disease, regular checkups by a podiatrist—at least annually—are a vital measure to ensure that your feet remain healthy," said Dr. Ronald Jensen, president of the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA). "A comprehensive foot care treatment plan can reduce amputation rates by as much as 85 percent." Here are several tips to help successfully manage diabetes:

- **Know the risk factors.**

African-Americans are one of the highest at-risk groups for developing diabetes, and it often runs in the family. Talk to your family members to determine if you are at risk for the disease.

- **Lose weight.** People with diabetes are often overweight, which nearly doubles the risk of complications when it comes to foot health.

- **Exercise.** As a means to keep weight down and improve circulation, walking is one of the best all-around exercises for the diabetic patient.

- **Wash feet daily.** Using mild soap and lukewarm water, wash your feet in the morning or before bed each evening.

- **Inspect feet and toes daily.** Check your feet every day for cuts, bruises, sores or changes



If you have diabetes, check feet every day for cuts, bruises or sores. If you spot a problem, schedule a visit with a podiatrist to help avoid serious complications.

to the toenails, such as thickening or discoloration. If age or other factors hamper self-inspection, ask someone to help you or use a mirror. Pay special attention to open sores or wounds that aren't healing properly. Either one could be a diabetic ulcer.

- **What is a diabetic foot ulcer?** A diabetic foot ulcer is an open sore or wound that most commonly occurs on the bottom of the foot in approximately 15 percent of patients with diabetes.

Of those who develop a foot ulcer, 6 percent will be hospitalized due to infection or other ulcer-related complication.

Once an ulcer is noticed, seek care from a podiatrist immediately. Foot ulcers in patients with diabetes should be treated quickly in order to reduce the risk of infection and amputation, improve function and quality of life and reduce health care costs.

To learn more, visit www.APMA.org.