

Health Awareness

Checking Feet Regularly Can Help Prevent Amputations

(NAPSA)—More than 18 million Americans have diabetes, and nearly one-third of them don't even know it. Left untreated, diabetes often leads to complications, including foot infections that can lead to lower-limb amputations.

In an effort to decrease the number of lower-limb amputations occurring in the U.S., the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) has launched its "Knock Your Socks Off" campaign. It encourages patients to ask their doctor to examine their feet as part of their regular checkup. Since the feet are said to reflect general health, it's important to remind your primary care physician—who sees you on a regular basis—to check for any signs of diabetes or other diseases that often show up in the feet first.

According to the International Diabetes Foundation, every 30 seconds a leg is lost to diabetes. The Foundation also estimates that, worldwide, up to 70 percent of all lower-limb amputations are related to the disease—making diabetes the most common cause of amputation not related to accident or injury.

More than 60 percent of non-traumatic lower-limb amputations in the United States occur among people with diabetes. Yet according to an APMA survey, 73 percent of respondents said their primary care physician never inspects their feet. Since the feet often show the first signs of diabetes, patients are missing opportunities to detect the disease early and avoid complications.

"Diabetes has a life-threatening impact," said APMA President Harold Glickman, DPM. "Check-



For people with diabetes, problems are often seen in the feet.

ing the feet for common symptoms of diabetes can help people at risk prevent serious complications."

Early detection is key to reducing amputation rates and improving the quality of life for people with diabetes. Warning signs include:

- Redness;
- Numbness;
- Swelling;
- Cold to the touch due to a lack of blood circulation;
- Inflammation; and/or
- Loss of hair.

If you notice any of these symptoms, or are just concerned about your overall foot health, make an appointment with an APMA podiatrist.

For free foot health information, contact the APMA at 1-800-FOOTCARE (1-800-366-8227) or visit www.apma.org on the Web. The Web site also provides answers to frequently asked questions, a checklist for diabetes and a true/false quiz about foot care.

Note to Editors: World Diabetes Day is November 14, 2005. The message: Put Feet First—Prevent Amputations.