

Summer Heat Bad For Diabetic Feet

(NAPSA)—The American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS) urges diabetes patients to be aware that hot and humid weather can lead to myriad foot woes—even third-degree burns—if they don't protect their feet carefully.

“Our concerns for diabetes patients involve swelling, dryness and cracking from wearing sandals, and problems associated with walking barefoot, such as puncture wounds and burns and blisters from hot pavement,” said Thanh Dinh, DPM, AACFAS, a foot and ankle surgeon at Boston's Beth Israel Deaconess-Joslin Foot Center.

“Just a few minutes walking barefoot on a hot driveway or sidewalk to fetch the newspaper can badly burn the soles of a diabetic patient's feet due to impaired nerve sensation from the disease,” said Dinh.

According to FootPhysicians.com, the ACFAS consumer Web site, any type of skin break on a diabetic foot has the potential to get infected and ulcerate if it isn't noticed right away. Therefore, wearing sandals all the time poses problems if you have diabetes, adds Virginia-based foot and ankle surgeon Michael Donato, DPM, AACFAS. “Feet constantly exposed in flip-flops or strap sandals can lose moisturizing oils, causing dry, rough skin prone to cracking.” He advises patients who like to wear sandals to inspect their feet very carefully every day and wear regular shoes a few days



a week to limit exposure.

Some patients experience foot swelling in hot weather, which makes their shoes fit tighter and may exert blister-causing pressure on the toes and heels. “Like it or not, diabetes patients whose feet get swollen in hot weather should wear support stockings,” said Dr. Donato. “Compression is the best way to reduce swelling and avoid complications such as poor circulation and further impaired nerve function.”

Dinh noted that vigilant foot care is a year-round responsibility for diabetes patients, but the temptations of warm weather can test even the most conscientious patient's resolve. “Unfortunately, there's no off-season for diabetes, so our patients always must be very careful with their feet to avoid skin breaks and subsequent infections and ulcerations that result from this disease,” she said.

For further information about diabetic foot care and other conditions and to locate a foot and ankle surgeon in your area, visit www.FootPhysicians.com.