



# HEALTH AWARENESS

## Neuropathy: Key Predictor In Diabetic Patients

(NAPSA)—New research reported by diabetic foot care experts shows that aggressive screening for evidence of nerve damage and sensory loss (neuropathy) can identify patients at the highest risk for severe, disease-induced foot problems, such as infection-prone skin ulcers and a debilitating deformity called Charcot foot. Left untreated, these complications put advanced-stage diabetes patients on a path to a lower-limb amputation.

“Simple neurologic testing combined with a thorough patient history are the most useful tools to identify diabetes patients with neuropathy and the highest risk for crippling foot disorders,” said Lawrence Fallat, DPM, FACFAS, director, podiatric surgical residency, Oakwood Healthcare System. “Accordingly, doctors must screen more aggressively to identify patients at high risk for Charcot foot and foot ulcers to help spot early warning signs and seek immediate care.”

Added American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS) President Robert G. Frykberg, DPM, MPH, FACFAS, “With early detection, doctors can institute measures to prevent foot deformity and eventual amputation.”

Fallat’s study showed that a simple, non-invasive test performed by a podiatric foot and ankle surgeon or primary care physician is effective in detecting neuropathy. He recommends that all diabetes patients with severe peripheral neuropathy should be informed about their elevated risk



**Early detection can help diabetic patients avoid serious foot problems.**

for Charcot foot and be monitored regularly for neurologic deficits.

Charcot foot occurs in approximately 30 percent of diabetic patients with peripheral neuropathy, and it often is misdiagnosed in early stages as gout, septic arthritis or osteomyelitis. The first symptoms occur when the foot becomes hot, painful, swollen and red. Balance is affected, bones become soft and prone to fractures, and many patients are unable to wear shoes.

At more advanced stages, Charcot patients lose most of the sensation in the foot and are unable to feel pain. In these cases, surgery is the best option to correct the reverse arch and make it less prone to ulceration.

For further information about diabetic foot conditions and to locate a podiatric foot and ankle surgeon, call ACFAS toll-free at 1-888-THE FEET or visit [www.acfas.org](http://www.acfas.org).