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**New York State Podiatrists Bring Awareness to People with Diabetes
November is Diabetes Awareness Month. Steps for practical, protective foot health.**

NEW YORK - Healthy feet are essential for overall good health, no matter your age, fitness level, or physical challenges. For people with diabetes, however, taking care of their feet is especially vital. More than 60 percent of all non-traumatic lower-limb amputations worldwide are related to complications from the disease, according to the American Diabetes Association.

A 2012 study by the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) indicates Hispanics with diabetes are particularly in danger, because more than 90 percent of those with the disease or at risk for it have never seen a podiatrist as part of their health care.

“The leading cause of hospitalization among people with diabetes—regardless of ethnicity—is foot ulcers and infections, but most of those problems are largely preventable,” says Dr. William Pierce, DPM, president of the New York State Podiatric Medical Association (NYSPMA). “It’s important for those with the disease to ‘knock their socks off’ and receive regular foot exams by today’s podiatrists.

“In fact, it is a good idea for all patients to have good foot care habits and have a visual inspection of their feet at every visit with their primary care physician.”

While ulcers—open sores on the foot—are the most common diabetes-related foot problem, several others are also serious and prevalent, including neuropathy, skin changes, calluses, poor circulation, and infection. The nerve damage that diabetes causes may mean a person with an ulcer or injury may be unaware of it until it becomes infected. Infection can lead to partial or full amputation of the foot or lower leg.

The good news is, regular care from a podiatrist can help reduce amputation rates between 45 and 85 percent, according to APMA.

People with diabetes need to inspect their feet daily and be vigilant for warning signs of ulcers, including irritation, redness, cracked or dry skin (especially around the heels), or drainage on their socks.

“Although ulcers can occur anywhere on the foot or ankle, they are typically found on pressure points on the foot, like the ball of the foot or bottom of the big toe,” adds Dr. Pierce. “If you discover an ulcer or have any symptoms, see a podiatrist immediately. In many cases, the foot can be saved with early treatment.”

In addition to examining your feet every day, and keeping your blood glucose in your target range, make sure to follow these foot health tips from the NYSPMA:

- Discuss your diabetes and the risks with your family. Diabetes can be hereditary, so talk to your family members about monitoring blood sugar and foot health.
- Never go barefoot. Always protect your feet with the proper footwear and make sure socks and shoes are comfortable and fit well.
- Trim toenails straight across, and never cut the cuticles. Seek immediate treatment for ingrown toenails, as they can lead to serious infection.
- Keep your feet elevated while sitting.
- Wiggle toes and move your feet and ankles up and down for five-minute sessions throughout the day.

“Successfully managing diabetes is a team effort, and today’s podiatrist is an integral player within that team,” Dr. Pierce says.

For more information on diabetes relating to feet, visit the new patient portal at www.nyspma.org. The site’s refreshed look provides enhanced and in-depth foot health information, including a dedicated section for good foot care guidelines for patients managing diabetes. Visitors to the mobile-friendly site can search for a podiatrist in the New York State area by using the Find a Podiatrist feature.

About NYSPMA:

Established in 1895, the New York State Podiatric Medical Association (NYSPMA) is the first organization of its kind in America. NYSPMA is the largest statewide component of the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) and its affiliated national network of certifying boards and professional colleges. The NYSPMA and its more than 1,100 doctors of podiatric medicine adhere to a code of strict ethical standards and participate in numerous programs to benefit patients, the podiatric profession and the general public. For more information, visit www.nyspma.org.