



November is National Diabetes Awareness Month: SRMC Physician Outlines Ways to Prevent Diabetic Foot Ulcers

November 25, 2019

November is Diabetes Awareness Month and an important opportunity to focus on diabetes, a disease that affects more than 30 million Americans. It's also a good time to highlight one of the serious health concerns facing people with diabetes – foot ulcers.

What is Diabetes?

“Most of the food we eat is turned into glucose, a form of sugar that serves as our body’s fuel. Diabetes is a metabolic disorder that disrupts the body’s absorption and use of glucose, which causes a person’s blood sugar levels to rise higher than normal,” explained Gregory Blasko, D.P.M., FACFAS, CWS, a dual board-certified foot and ankle surgeon affiliated with Salem Regional Medical Center’s (SRMC) medical staff and the SRMC Wound Healing Center.



Dr. Blasko

“As the sugar builds up in the body, it can lead to serious health complications such as kidney disease, eye problems and vascular disorders. Over time, diabetes may also cause nerve damage called neuropathy, especially in the feet.”

How Do Foot Ulcers Develop?

“People with neuropathy often experience significant numbness, tingling, burning or pain in the feet. When you lose feeling in your feet, sores or other injuries may go unnoticed until serious ulcers develop. Other complications of neuropathy, including changes in the moisture of the skin and the development of abnormalities like bunions and hammertoes, also increase the risk of foot problems in people with diabetes.”

Approximately a quarter of people living with diabetes will develop a foot ulcer or open sore, which can lead to infections, non-healing wounds or even possible removal of the affected limb without the proper treatment.

How Can Diabetic Foot Ulcers Be Prevented?

According to Dr. Blasko, managing diabetes and proper foot care are the keys to avoiding diabetic foot ulcers.

“There are three main preventive measures I stress to patients with diabetes. The first and most important is to work with your doctor to control your blood sugar. Keeping blood sugar levels as close to normal as possible not only reduces your risk of developing neuropathy, but can also help prevent problems with your eyes, kidneys and vascular system.”

“The second is to check your feet daily for any red spots, cuts, swelling, blisters, sores or other injuries. Use a mirror to help you see the bottoms of your feet, or ask a loved one for help. If you notice anything unusual, such as a callus or darkened area, call your doctor right away. The earlier potential problems are caught, the greater the chance they can be treated successfully.”

“Thirdly, protect your feet every day. People with diabetes should not walk barefoot, even indoors. Always wear indoor shoes to protect your feet from getting cuts or scratches from things around your house, such as a fallen piece of glass, sewing needle or toothpick.”

“Along with these measures, don’t smoke or quit smoking,” Dr. Blasko added. “Smoking can reduce blood flow to the feet and make wounds heal slowly.”

SRMC Offers Advanced Treatment for Diabetic Foot Ulcers

The specially-trained physicians and clinical staff at SRMC’s Wound Healing Center (WHC) are highly experienced in treating and healing acute, chronic or non-healing wounds, including those associated with conditions like diabetes.

Some of the innovative treatments provided for diabetic foot ulcers may include wound debridement, which is the removal of infected tissue from the site of the wound, and hyperbaric oxygen therapy. Hyperbaric oxygen therapy is a non-invasive and painless treatment that promotes wound healing and fights infection by increasing the amount of oxygen delivered to the damaged tissues.

SRMC’s Wound Healing Center has been very successful at treating hard-to-heal wounds caused by complications from diabetes and other conditions, and in helping many patients avoid limb loss. Last year, over 95% of patients who came to the WHC were discharged from the center fully healed.

For more information about the specialized care provided at SRMC’s Wound Healing Center or to make an appointment, call 330-332-7415.

About Dr. Blasko

In addition to his role at SRMC’s Wound Healing Center, Dr. Blasko specializes in diagnosing and treating conditions of the foot and ankle as a podiatrist at NOMS Ankle & Foot Care Centers. He sees patients at office locations throughout the area, including in Salem at 2380 Southeast Boulevard, Suite A. For more information, call 330-337-8870.

About SRMC's Wound Healing Center

Since its launch in 2012, Salem Regional Medical Center's Wound Healing Center has made a difference in the lives of more than 2,700 area patients with acute, chronic or non-healing wounds. With an average wound healing success rate over 95%, the Center offers hyperbaric oxygen therapy and other leading edge treatments for these types of wounds, which include diabetic, venous/arterial and pressure ulcers; osteomyelitis; radionecrosis; infections; compromised skin grafts and flaps; insect bites; thermal burns; and wounds that have not healed in 30 days.

SRMC's Wound Healing Center is recognized as a "Center of Distinction" by Healogics, Inc., the nation's leading and largest wound care management company. The center earned this prestigious national award by consistently demonstrating clinical excellence in wound healing and superior patient satisfaction rates.

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