

Small Cuts Can Create Big Problem in Diabetics

Tuesday, April 21, 2009

Just a little cut on the foot can become a big problem for a person with diabetes. Diabetics are much more susceptible to developing infections on the feet that, if left undetected, can lead to amputation, according to doctors. "Most of the time, people will have a small wound, like a cut between the toes, and instead of seeing a physician, they talk to a friend or family member," said Dr. Jose Ayala, a Harlingen podiatrist and wound-care specialist. "They put medicine on it themselves, and no one tends to believe it's a major problem."

Within seven days, however, a small wound on the foot of someone with diabetes can quickly become seriously infected, requiring hospitalization and surgery, Ayala said. According to an article that appeared last month in the journal *Diabetes Care*, diabetics are eight times as likely as non-diabetics to undergo amputation of a lower limb. Those amputations are frequently related to small wounds that became infected, doctors said.

Luckily, serious infections can be prevented by practicing good foot care. Ayala suggests that diabetics have their feet examined by a podiatrist or other doctor at least four times a year. A doctor can check your feet for wounds, show you how to properly cut toenails, and test the sensation in your feet, he said.

Source: Melissa McEver, The Brownsville Herald [3/1/09]

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