



Preventing Diabetic Foot & Toe Problems

DIABETES IS AN ever increasing problem in our society. Diabetic rates are soaring due to obesity and lack of exercise. Much attention has been focused on regular eyes exams to avoid the terrible affects that diabetes has on the eye (retinal nerve).

The foot is also an important area that should be checked periodically if you're diabetic. The diabetic foot exam should be performed once yearly.

This exam should be seen as an early detection and prevention tool for the many problems that can plaque the diabetic foot. Problems such as, primarily loss of sensation (neuropathy), the development of foot ulcers and decreased blood flow to the foot, as well as, taking care of developing foot deformities before they become problems.

Specifically, via multiple site pulse testing, it will be determined if there is any

large and/or small vessel disease. If there appears to be a problem, a referral to a vascular specialist will be made. The good news is that with use of lasers and angioplasty any arteries that are clogged can be cleared with little need for recuperation and usually no hospital stay. This means you get back to living life without missing any activities. Only by specifically testing your circulation status and taking a history can a determination be made if there is a problem.

With the diabetic exam we also test for sensation impairment. A filament is used to determine if there is any loss and all areas subtle or obvious are duly noted for further follow-up. Additionally, there are new medicines to handle Diabetic Neuropathy, one being Lyricia which appears to be an improvement over Neurontin, which is still the old standby. I often found that many patients are under-treated with their Neurontin and thus still have complaints due to the neuropathy. If this is the case, we will consult with your primary care doctor and likely increase or change your medicine.

During the examination, any foot deformities are also noted and x-rays are taken if necessary. Many times with the use of orthotics, triple depth shoes or special over-the-counter diabetic insoles, most orthopedic problems can be resolved simply. Sometimes early surgical intervention is needed to avoid more complicated problems in the future.

Finally, the use of injectable fat substitutes is gaining popularity. Surgery can be avoided by injecting a new fat pad where the worn-down natural one had once performed its function or by skillfully placing the fat substitute under a corn to take the pressure off the bone and again avoiding surgery.

The bottom line is, if you are a diabetic and you have not had your feet examined within the past year by a podiatrist then it's time to make your appointment. By seeing your local podiatrist you can reduce the chances of suffering the devastating effects that diabetes can cause to your feet. Truly, with diabetes an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Ivar E. Roth DPM/MPH is the only Podiatrist on staff at Hoag Hospital to have full Foot and Ankle surgical privileges. Dr. Ivar Roth is located at 351 Hospital Road Suite #407 in Tower One of the Newport Lido Medical Bldg. Please call 949-650-1147 for an appointment. Courtesy Valet parking is provided to all his patients. 

