

# Journal

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## Diabetic foot care

By May Chang

One out of four people with diabetes will have at least one foot ulcer in their lifetime. Two out of three non-traumatic amputations performed in the U.S. are on a person with diabetes. That's the bad news.

The good news is that the majority of these amputations can be prevented. If you have had diabetes for more than six years, you may have lost some feeling in your feet. Since you may not feel your feet well, you can reduce your risk for ulcers and infections with regular foot inspections, which include:

- Looking at the bottom of your feet daily for calluses, blisters, swelling, bleeding or ingrown toenails.
- See an at-risk foot specialist or primary care provider for any of these concerns
- Controlling blood glucose
- Maintaining normal blood pressure
- Lowering bad cholesterol

Taking these measures can prevent foot problems that can cascade into serious infections ending in toe, foot or leg amputation, according to May Chang, ARNP, an at-risk foot specialist for the Foot and Ankle Clinic at Pacific Medical Centers.

Foot problems usually are not evident in the first years after a person is diagnosed with diabetes. "It's when blood sugar is uncontrolled for about seven years that we begin to see nerve damage in the feet," said Chang.

Many times a person with diabetes doesn't realize that they have lost feeling in their feet and consequently may not realize when their feet are wounded. Chang explained why daily foot inspections are so important. "If you have lost feeling in your feet and are not wearing protective shoes when you get up to walk from the couch to the bathroom, you can step on a small sharp object that punctures your skin. A simple cut can quickly advance to become an infection if left untreated. The infection can then potentially reach bone. By then a surgical intervention may be needed," she said.

"Patients who have a high-risk foot are recommended to receive toenail care from an at-risk foot specialist or a medical provider periodically. My job is to help patients keep their feet so they can continue to participate in life's activities," she said.

*May Chang is a certified Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner who received her education and training at the University of Washington. For more information, visit [www.PacMed.org](http://www.PacMed.org). ■*



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