

Diabetes – Looking After Your Feet: A new patient education leaflet



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It is estimated that 130 diabetes-related amputations take place every week in the UK. Perhaps the most unacceptable fact is the estimation by experts that 80% of diabetes-related amputations could be avoided if the correct foot checks were carried out at the right time (Diabetes UK, 2016). Currently, 300 new diabetic foot ulcers are diagnosed every day in the UK. If foot ulcers are left untreated, they can eventually lead to amputations. Both amputations and ulcers have a huge detrimental effect on quality of life and, sadly, up to 70% of people with diabetes die within 5 years of undergoing an amputation.

In some areas of England, people are twice as likely to undergo diabetes-related amputation as the national average. There are clear guidelines from NICE (2015) about how foot care should be managed in people with diabetes; however, because the level of care is so varied across the country, not everyone is receiving the right information or the necessary health checks.

The InDependent Diabetes Trust (IDDT) is a patient-based charity for people with diabetes and their families, and we have vowed to drive down the increasing number of avoidable diabetes-related amputations. The charity is aware that there is a shortage of podiatrists in the NHS and that many of the annual diabetes checks, which include assessments of the feet, are being carried out in primary care by nurses. For various reasons, and through no fault of their own, many nurses are not receiving the training they need to carry out the correct foot checks. In addition, the lack of diabetes education in some parts of the country (Health and Social Care Information Centre, 2016) means that many people are unaware that diabetes could put their feet and limbs at risk if not managed correctly.

While we hope for improvements in the way the NHS looks after this important complication of diabetes, the IDDT feels that a more proactive

rather than reactive approach to foot care is essential to prevent ulcers and amputations. To this end, we have published a booklet to provide people with information on why they need to take care of their feet, what they need to look out for to keep their feet healthy and where to seek help if problems arise. For example, many people are unaware that something as apparently simple as patches of hard skin can form calluses which, in people with diabetes and peripheral neuropathy, may cover a much deeper wound or ulcer.

The booklet, *Diabetes – Looking After Your Feet*, is written in non-medical language and covers conditions ranging from the seemingly unimportant to the obviously serious, to show people what they should be looking out for in their daily foot checks and to encourage them to seek help if they notice any changes in their feet.

The booklet is free for people with diabetes, and we are happy to supply copies for healthcare professionals to give to their patients to help prevent foot ulcers and amputations. ■

Diabetes UK (2016) *Putting Feet First: 6-step guide to improving diabetes footcare*. DUK, London. Available at: <http://bit.ly/2jMLQVx> (accessed 13.01.17)

Health and Social Care Information Centre (2016) *National Diabetes Audit 2013–2014 and 2014–2015. Report 1: care processes and treatment targets*. HSCIC, Leeds. Available at: <http://bit.ly/2hyTVvR> (accessed 13.01.17)

NICE (2015) *Diabetic foot problems: prevention and management* (NG19). NICE, London. Available at: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng19 (accessed 13.01.17)

Contact the IDDT

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