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Diabetic Complications and Amputation Prevention

People with diabetes are prone to many foot problems, often because of two complications of diabetes: nerve damage (neuropathy) and poor blood circulation. Neuropathy causes loss of feeling in your feet, taking away your ability to feel pain and discomfort, so you may not detect an injury or irritation. Poor circulation in your feet reduces your ability to heal, making it hard for even a tiny cut to resist infection.

When you have diabetes, you need to be aware of how foot problems can arise from disturbances in the skin, nails, nerves, bones, muscles, and blood vessels. Furthermore, in diabetes, small foot problems can turn into serious complications. You can do much to prevent amputation by taking two important steps: Follow the proactive measures discussed below—and see *Dr. Peterson regularly*.

Diabetes-Related Foot and Leg Problems

Having diabetes puts you at risk for developing a wide range of foot problems:

- **Infections and ulcers (sores) that don't heal.**
- **Corns and calluses.**
- **Dry, cracked skin.**
- **Nail disorders.**
- **Hammertoes and bunions.**
- **Brittle bones (osteoporosis).**
- **Charcot foot.**
- **Blocked artery in the legs.**

What Your Foot and Ankle Surgeon Can Do

A major goal in care of the diabetic foot is to prevent amputation. There are many new surgical techniques available to save feet and legs, including joint reconstruction and wound healing technologies. Getting regular foot checkups and seeking immediate help when you notice something can keep small problems from worsening. Dr. Peterson works together with other health care providers to prevent and treat complications from diabetes.

When is Amputation Necessary?

The goals of treatment of diabetic foot problems are not only to save the life and limb, but also to get the patient healed and moving about as soon as possible. If vascular surgery cannot improve blood flow and podiatric surgery cannot restore function, amputation may be the only solution that gets the patient walking again. Amputation may involve one or two toes, part of the foot, or part of the leg. It is selected on the basis of the patient's condition and level of predicted healing. A return to normal life is especially possible today because of advances in prosthetics.

Your Proactive Measures

You play a vital role in reducing complications. Follow these guidelines and contact Dr. Peterson if you notice any problems:

- **Inspect your feet daily.**
- **Observe for changes in circulation.**
- **Don't ignore leg pain.**
- **Nail cutting.**
- **Keep floors free of sharp objects.**
- **Don't go barefoot.**
- **Check shoes and socks.**
- **Have your sense of feeling tested.**

