

Diabetes Newsletter You and Your Diabetes

World diabetes day is celebrated every year on 14 November. This is the second of a five year campaign to address the growing need for diabetes education and prevention programmes. Diabetes Awareness Week 2010 is also starting 16-22 November.

Diabetes is a silent killer that kills one person every ten seconds. There are 250 million people globally living with diabetes. Every year worldwide another seven million develop diabetes. The Ministry of Health estimates the number of people with diabetes locally in the Capital and Coast DHB to be around 12,000.

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic condition that affects the levels of glucose (sugar) in your blood which become high. The body is not able to convert the glucose into energy. We need the hormone insulin to do this. There are three types of diabetes:-

Type 1 mainly affects youth and is characterised by a lack of production of insulin in the body, This is increasing worldwide and 70,000 children are expected to develop diabetes annually.

Type 2 diabetes is due to body's resistance to insulin and is responsible for 90-95 % of diabetes cases. This type is also increasing at alarming rates globally as a result of increased urbanisation, high rates of obesity, sedentary lifestyles and stress. Thirty minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most days and a healthy diet can drastically reduce the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

Gestational diabetes can develop in pregnant women. Often after the baby is born the diabetes disappears but it is still important to get blood test checks every year.

At **resonance podiatry** we have patients with all three types of diabetes. We understand the importance of looking after patients' feet and treating them as individuals so that their needs can be addressed and management plans worked out with them to keep their feet healthy.

How does Diabetes affect your feet?

Diabetes is the leading cause of non-traumatic lower-limb amputations. It can affect the nerves in your feet (peripheral neuropathy) so that protective normal sensation is lost and any injury or trauma to your feet is not felt. Your skin can also become very dry and hard (callus) and cracks can occur that can become quite deep. The circulation can also be affected as the arteries become hardened and narrow so less blood gets to the feet (peripheral vascular disease). People with diabetes also have less resistance to infection so a foot infection can spread very quickly. Warning signs such as redness, numbness, swelling or non-healing wounds are important indicators of serious disease and need to be treated promptly and effectively to prevent amputations. Every 30 seconds a limb is lost because of diabetes around the world.

Who checks your feet?

YOUR GP:

Every person with diabetes is able to have a free annual medical review with the Get Checked – Aotearoa programme with their GPs and checking their feet is included in this. Your feet should also be checked at other visits as they can often reveal the first signs and symptoms of the disease.

YOUR PODIATRIST:

As the Diabetes Podiatrist Team Leader at **resonance podiatry** I have developed a screening programme based on International and National guidelines. An **annual foot screening appointment** is made to look at risk factors such as poor blood supply, neuropathy (damage to nerves), foot deformities and callus or build up of hard skin. This will give us the information needed to define individual risk so that patient and the podiatrist are aware of your needs and can structure foot care accordingly. Armed with this knowledge and adopting positive self-care foot behaviours will prevent serious complications such as ulcers and ultimately amputations. **resonance podiatry** has good relationships with local GPs and nurses with whom we frequently liaise to provide the best possible care for our patients with diabetes.

What does the screening involve?

This is non-invasive and takes about 45 mins in our gait lab. It involves history taking, physical examination and pressure analysis statically and dynamically. Pictures of pressures and loading are printed and a report sent to you and your GP. The examination of your feet will look at:-

- Circulation - we feel for foot pulses and look for other signs
- Neuropathy - we determine lack of feeling or sensation
- Callus or pressure areas and their causes
- Foot / Nail deformities
- Footwear
- Pressure analysis through computerised imagery

Further tests that may be required will be discussed with you. At the end of the screening you should have a clear idea of your risk status and what you need to do to keep your feet healthy.

Education is the cornerstone of diabetes management and early detection and prevention of foot problems is certainly the key in preventing amputations. We have a range of leaflets which will help you to effectively care for your feet on a day to day basis.

Which organisations can help?

Diabetes New Zealand is a national charity that provides information and support for people with diabetes as well as a very good quarterly magazine. The Wellington branch is very active and regularly updates its members about current events and is well worth joining. We have application forms or you can phone 0800 369 636.

The team at **resonance podiatry** are committed to keeping your feet healthy. If you have any foot problems you should call our practice manager Tina 04 233 9110 for an appointment. If your needs are urgent we will make sure that you are seen or speak to a podiatrist within 24 hours.

Finally I wish you well during Diabetes Awareness week and would like you to have this poster with some easy points to remember!

Best wishes from all the team at **resonance**.

Fiona Popert
Diabetes Podiatrist Team leader

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