

HEALTH

HARLEM COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

DIABETICS: KEEP YOUR FEET AND TOES

by Eunice Ramsey-Parker, DPM, MPH and Clinic Administrator, Foot Center of New York

On the wall in my office is a map of a few blocks in Harlem with bright red zones that indicate 'high density areas of poorly controlled diabetes.' Tens of thousands of people live within those blocks – they are part of the epidemic of diabetes that continues to spread in Harlem.

Is your diabetes poorly controlled too, or is it under control? Either way, your feet have to be one of your major concerns.

If you're a diabetic, your feet should always be at the top of your mind – a diabetic's poor circulation

makes the feet especially vulnerable to infections that can lead to amputation – and worse – caused by the most ordinary of actions or events.

Here are a few tips and words of advice from a podiatrist who sees far too many diabetic feet in trouble:

Don't go barefoot anywhere, anytime, especially not on a rug.

Wash your feet daily and dry well, particularly between your toes.

Inspect feet top and bottom daily for any nicks, cuts, abrasions, discoloration, or changes. Use a hand mirror if you can't get



a good look otherwise.

If you find a corn or callus, don't try to remove it on your own.

Keep your feet moisturized to avoid cracks in the skin.

Wear shoes that fit well to avoid blisters or toes crammed together.

Wear socks made of synthetics that wick away moisture and that don't rub or bunch.

I don't recommend salon pedicures for di-

abetics. Salons present too many dangers: the soaking tubs, sharp instruments and pumice stones could all lead to infections in openings in the skin. See a podiatrist to have your toenails cut, and apply your own polish if your podiatrist okays it.

If you see any of

the above-mentioned problems, visit your podiatrist promptly. To maintain foot health, be sure to see a podiatrist two-three times a year anyway, or more often if the doctor so instructs you. A podiatrist is the diabetic's partner in keeping feet and toes as healthy as pos-

sible, thus keeping feet and toes intact!

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