

## **PREVENTING FOOT ULCERS AND AMPUTATIONS**

A simple, two-minute check can prevent foot ulcers and amputations on your facility's diabetic patients. All diabetic patients should be checked at least every 2 to 3 months for signs of ulcerations that, when left untreated, can lead to infection and may ultimately lead to lower limb amputations.

Most diabetic patients are susceptible to foot ulcerations caused by poor circulation in the lower extremities and neuropathy that inhibits nerve sensation. Ulcers are the leading cause of foot amputations among people with diabetes and they are preventable, in most cases, if the patient's feet are checked on a routine basis. It is estimated that more than 86,000 lower extremity amputations are performed in the United States every year on patients with diabetes. It's so tragic when someone undergoes an amputation that could have been prevented by regular, two-minute foot exam.

Exams should include nerve sensation, skin irregularities (corns, calluses, punctures and areas of redness), swelling, drainage, and foot deformities that cause unnatural pressure points that are prone to ulceration. The toenails need to be checked for ingrown nails or too thick and long. Have there been changes since the last evaluation? Also is the patient wearing well fitting shoes? If any of these questions are yes, the physician needs to be notified.

It doesn't take long for infection to worsen and ulcers to occur without the patient being aware that anything is wrong. Diabetes carries an enormous health care burden, but being diligent about foot care is a prudent and simple way to avoid one crippling complication of this disease.