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November Is Diabetes Awareness Month: SRMC Physician Discusses Importance of Diabetic Foot Care

November is Diabetes Awareness Month and an important opportunity to focus on diabetes, a disease that affects an estimated 37 million Americans. It's also a good time to highlight one of the serious health concerns facing people with diabetes – foot ulcers.

What is Diabetes?

"Diabetes is a chronic condition in which a person's blood glucose, or blood sugar, levels are too high," explained Athena Beis, M.D., Medical Director of Salem Regional Medical Center's (SRMC) Wound Healing Center.

"Glucose is a type of sugar that comes from foods we eat and is the body's primary source of energy. A hormone called insulin moves the glucose we consume through the bloodstream and into the body's cells, where it is stored and used for fuel. Diabetes develops when the body doesn't make enough insulin or use it as well as it should, causing a build-up of glucose in the blood."



Dr. Beis

Diabetes Complications

"When people with diabetes cannot control their glucose levels through diet, exercise and medication, serious health complications such as heart disease, kidney disease and eye damage can occur. Over time, about 60 percent of those living with diabetes develop nerve damage called neuropathy, especially in their feet."

How Do Foot Ulcers Form?

"People with neuropathy often experience numbness, tingling or loss of sensation in their feet, which can cause sores or other injuries to go unnoticed until serious ulcers form. Chronic wounds such as diabetic foot ulcers can not only impact a person's quality of life but also lead to serious complications, such as infections or even possible removal of the affected limb."

Preventing Foot Ulcers

According to Dr. Beis, managing diabetes and proper foot care are the keys to preventing diabetic foot ulcers. This includes:

- Stopping smoking

- Scheduling routine foot checkups with your healthcare provider
- Performing daily foot inspections by you or a loved one
- Practicing regular foot care, including washing feet daily and cleaning toenails
- Seeking professional help for corn and callus removal
- Wearing clean, dry socks
- Choosing supportive, well-fitting footwear
- Improving circulation through diet and exercise

SRMC's Wound Healing Center Offers Advanced Treatments

If a foot ulcer develops, early detection and specialized wound care can reduce healing times and amputation risk by almost half.

SRMC's Wound Healing Center offers advanced treatments for diabetic ulcers, such as hyperbaric oxygen therapy, to help prevent infections, promote new tissue growth and successfully heal difficult wounds.

The Wound Healing Center is also the first and only facility in the region to offer the Reaplix 3C Patch®, a personalized new wound care method made using the patient's own blood. Extensive clinical research studies have shown that with the 3C Patch®, diabetic wounds are 89% more likely to heal compared with the best standard of care.

For more information about the care provided at SRMC's Wound Healing Center or to make an appointment, call 330-332-7415.