

- **Infections:** Fungal infection of the skin or toenails are common from constant use of shoes. Ingrown toenails invariably result in traumas and infection. All these increase the chance of developing diabetic foot.
- **Smoking:** Undoubtedly, the root of all troubles, smoking accelerates blood vessel damages, hence superimposes the risk of developing diabetic foot.

When to Seek Medical Attention

If you have diabetes and if you experience any of these symptoms, contact your health care provider right away

- Not being able of feel hot or cold in your peripheries very well- loss of sensation
- Your feet tingles or hurts
- Change in color or temperature of your feet.
- Skin on your feet gets dry or cracked.
- Tingling, burning or Pain in your feet.
- Cramping in your thighs or calves whenever you do some physical activity
- Toenails turning thick and yellow
- Fungal infection between your toes, unusual itching
- Any sort of abnormality such as blisters, ulcers. Sores, corns, etc in your feet.

Self Care and Prevention

Diabetic patients should take the following steps to prevent losing their leg-

- **Hygiene:** Wash your feet everyday with mild soap and warm water, before going to bed. Pat dry them rather than rubbing vigorously.
- **Moisturiser:** Use lotion to keep feet soft and moist. Prevent dry skin and skin cracks.
- **Trimming nails:** Toe nails should be trimmed right across. Avoid the corners; this will prevent injuries from sharp nail corners. Use the nail file carefully and effectively.
- **Not walking barefoot:** Barefoot walking, increases chances of minor injuries. Always use slippers or shoes, to protect the feet.
- **Stop smoking:** Nothing to say about it. It's the cause of almost any disease you can get.
- **Foot examination:** Regularly examine your foot. Don't avoid the slightest of injuries. Seek immediate care.
- **Keep the floor clean:** Keep the floor off from sharp objects or from anything that you can get hurt from.
- **Exercise:** Regular exercise increases blood flow to all the organs. It also helps keeping the glucose level in check.
- **Diabetes control:** Lastly, get an appointment with a diabetes specialist. Keep your diabetes in control. Remember, diabetes is indifferent from AIDS, only that it can be controlled.

Treatment of diabetic foot is antibiotics and amputation. Save that leg of yours. Diabetes may be hereditary in some cases but diabetic foot is not. It is you who can prevent it.

The writer is a Research Physician of Centre for Child and Adolescent Health (CCAH), ICDDR,B.