

The Risk of Diabetic Foot and Its Care

Diabetic Foot and Its Danger

Diabetic foot is one of the complications developed from diabetes mellitus. Common diabetic foot problems encountered by patients include foot open lesion, nail problems, corns & callosities and Infection & gangrene. Diabetes mellitus can cause serious complications such as foot ulcerations. If treated improperly, high blood sugar level will cause damage to the nervous system and results in the loss of sensation. Reduced sense of pain often makes patients unaware of any trauma or injuries in the foot. These unattended wounds may frequently get infected and cause foot ulcer which may eventually lead to major lower limb amputation.

Currently, there are over 120 million diabetic mellitus patients in the world and about 4-10% suffered from foot ulcer problems. In Hong Kong, there are more than 600,000 diabetic mellitus patients, i.e. one out of ten suffers from diabetic diseases and similar to other regions, about 4-10% of the total diabetic mellitus patients have foot ulcer problems.

Risk Factors of Diabetic Foot

The most common risk factors of diabetic foot include: Neuropathy, poor shoe wear, peripheral vascular disease and poor socio-economic status e.g. patients who live in apartments inaccessible to lift may overuse their feet and hence prone to injury.

Treatment

Acute diabetic foot ulcers have to undergo radical debridement and wound coverage procedures including skin graft, flap coverage, bony and soft tissue reconstruction if the ulcer of their foot is badly infected. The objective of treatment is to salvage the foot. If feet deformity is detected, special orthosis such as diabetic shoes, socks, special insole etc. will be provided. In the salvaged foot, reconstructive surgery may be needed to prevent recurrence. If acute treatment measure fails, patients may have to undergo lower extremity amputation. These patients will have to use prosthesis to maintain their daily activities after the surgery. This will certainly cause great morbidity and affect patients' quality of life.

Combined Diabetic Foot Care Centre – Diabetic Foot Education & Treatment Programme

The Combined Diabetic Foot Care Centre was established by the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong at Queen Mary Hospital with the objective to provide comprehensive care to diabetic foot patients including Treatment; Care, Education and Counseling services. The center also formulates a Diabetic Foot Education & Treatment Programme which is held on a regular basis. The team comprises of professionals including foot and ankle specialist; podiatrist; prosthetist & orthotist; diabetic foot nurse and community nurse etc to educate and share their experiences with the patients and their family members on the daily care of diabetic foot and provide multi-disciplinary specialist treatment and assistance on the disease.