

Foot Ulcers: Walking Programme Can Help Diabetics

Individuals with Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy might be able to engage in a graduated walking program under close supervision of a medical professional and thus prevent other life threatening illnesses.



Despite diabetes: preventing illnesses by walking © SXC

One complication related to diabetes, Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy, can cause individuals to develop foot ulcers and, in extreme cases, amputation might be necessary. Previously, doctors and scientists have recommended that individuals with this complication stay off their feet.

"Physical activity is recommended for people with diabetes because it is proven to reduce the risk of mortality and development of cardiovascular disease," said Joseph LeMaster, an associate professor of family and community medicine at the University of Missouri.

In the MU study, LeMaster examined the effects of lower-extremity exercise and walking intervention programmes on foot ulcer occurrence in people with diabetic peripheral neuropathy.

Participants with Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy were assigned to one of two groups: an intervention group, which was frequently monitored and assisted through leg strengthening exercises, a graduated walking programme and motivational telephone calls every two weeks, and a control group. Both groups received diabetic and regular foot care education and eight sessions with a physical therapist.

During the first six months, LeMaster noted an increase in the total number of minor foot lesions and ulcers. However, at the end of the year, the number of lesions and ulcers in the intervention group had started to decrease compared to the control group, indicating a reduced risk.

"Because weight-bearing activity did not lead to a significant increase in foot ulcers, our study suggests that weight-bearing exercise might be appropriate for people with Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy if the patient currently has no foot ulcers, wears proper footwear, and is in a walking programme that is well-supervised and safely monitored by a medical professional," LeMaster said.

Source: [University of Missouri-Columbia](http://www.missouri.edu/) at <http://www.missouri.edu/>