



Case of the Month

Why is the hole in my foot back again? The Case of the Recurring Diabetic Foot Ulcer

August 2015

Dear Physician,

Thank you very much for your referrals to our office. We love helping your patients restore their active lifestyles. This month's case concerns patients that have recurring diabetic foot ulcers. Happy Reading!

The problem:

A patient was living with a big hole on the bottom of her big toe at the joint. This wound started in January 2014 and appeared to have healed after a 4 month treatment at a wound care center. After three weeks it reappeared and the patient used home remedies along with the help of a doctor to get relief. Fast forward to July 2015 and the patient, still living with a huge hole, had suffered multiple infections in the ulcer and was at risk for amputation. What caused this ulcer to re-appear?



The patient's concern:

The patient, obviously frustrated, wondered why the ulcer didn't completely heal "on the inside" and why it re-appeared, especially after spending great amounts of money and enduring several months of treatment at a wound care center. That was a very insightful question. The answer is: **The ulcer is not the problem. The ulcer is a symptom of a larger issue.** In this very common scenario, two things are necessary for an ulcer to form. The first: NUMBNESS. Numbness is caused by having diabetes with prolonged uncontrolled blood sugar. The second: DEFORMITY. Deformity causes excessive pressure, as the bony prominence just under the skin rubs on a shoe or other restrictive, hard surface. When numbness and deformity are combined, the patient is at risk for a foot ulcer.



Figure 1 – Patient's Bunion Deformity

The solution:

After one week of ulcer debridement and total contact casting (see my article on total contact casting), the ulcer decreased in size by half. Why so quickly? **The problem causing the ulcer was pressure from a deformity. The total contact cast relieved the pressure enough for the ulcer to begin healing.** Once the ulcer is healed, she will have surgery for her foot deformity. Happily, this patient is on the mend, and can look forward to not living her life around this ulcer.



If you have patients who have recurring ulcers, please don't hesitate to refer your patient to us, call 830.569.3338. If you would like to learn more, call Stephanie to schedule a lunch and learn.

Yours in Good Health,

Darren J. Silvester, DPM