

## **DIABETES**

Diabetes mellitus is a condition in which the amount of glucose (sugar) in the blood is too high because the body is unable to use it properly. This is because the body's method of converting glucose into energy is not working as it should.

### **There are two common forms of diabetes:**

**Type 1**, also known as insulin dependent diabetes. This usually affects children and young adults. People with this type of diabetes require daily insulin injections and must pay close attention to their diet and exercise.

**Type 2**, also known as non-insulin dependent diabetes, is by far the most common, usually affects people over the age of 40 years and is controlled by diet, exercise and sometimes tablets.

### **How diabetes can affect your feet**

Your feet are supplied with blood to keep them healthy. They also have a multitude of nerves that act as an emergency warning system. For example, if you have a stone in your shoe, nerves will normally send a message to your brain to investigate. However, if your diabetes is poorly controlled for a long period of time, this may lead to:

- nerve damage, or 'peripheral neuropathy', which impairs sensation to the feet, and/or
- reduced blood supply, also known as 'poor circulation'.

Nerve damage may mean that you no longer notice that stone in your shoe, due to the loss of sensation to your feet. This could then lead to an injury you can't feel, and possibly infection. If you have poor circulation, any injuries or infections to your feet (i.e. cuts, burns or scratches) will take longer to heal. This is due to less blood flowing through the small arteries in your feet. Blood brings energy to working muscles and aids in healing any tissue damage.

If you have poor circulation, you will need to take extra care to protect your feet from injury. Most foot problems in people who have diabetes occur when injuries — and often infections — go unnoticed and untreated, or when healing is delayed due to poor circulation.

### **General Guide:**

- Maintain acceptable blood sugar level control
- Don't smoke
- Exercise regularly
- Avoid barefoot walking
- Keep your feet clean
- Wear well-fitting shoes
- Cut and file nails carefully
- Have corns, calluses and other foot problems treated by your podiatrist.