PREFERRED PODIATRY GROUP

30.5%: The Diabetes Statistic Most Clinicians Have Never Heard

November is National Diabetes Month. Here is why the foot belongs at the center of the conversation, and who is changing the outcome.

Ask a room of clinicians which diagnosis carries a 5-year mortality of about 31%, and most will name cancer. They would be right: pooled 5-year mortality across reported cancers is 31.0%.

The 5-year mortality patients with a diabetic foot ulcer is 30.5%.

After a minor amputation, it rises to 46.2%. After a major amputation, it is 56.6%. Those figures come from a 2020 meta-analysis in the *Journal of Foot and Ankle Research*, and they put a foot wound in the same category as the diagnoses we treat with urgency.

The scale of the problem

About 40.1 million Americans have diabetes, and 11 million of them do not know it yet. Between 19% and 34% of people with diabetes will develop a foot ulcer in their lifetime. About 1 in 5 people who develop one will need a lower-extremity amputation.

Healing the first ulcer is not the finish line. Between 25% and 44% of patients have a recurrence within a year, and 50% to 65% within three to five years. That makes the diabetic foot a chronic condition that needs a long-term relationship, not a single episode of care.

The burden is not shared equally. Black and Hispanic adults have a higher risk of amputation than White adults, even after accounting for how often ulcers occur. Uninsured patients are more likely to undergo amputation within a year of their first ulcer.

Who changes the curve

The good news is that this can sometimes be one of the most preventable bad outcomes in medicine. A 2020 meta-analysis of 12 studies found that care teams that included podiatry were associated with 55% fewer major amputations (risk ratio 0.45). The authors called for more research, but the direction is consistent: early screening, consistent follow-up, and fast escalation help keep limbs intact.

Most of that prevention does not happen in an operating room. It happens at the bedside, in routine visits, long before a wound opens. It looks like:

- **Regular foot exams that catch risk early.** Monofilament testing, pulse checks, and a close look at skin, nails, and shoes at every visit.
- **Nail and callus care that removes the warning signs.** Calluses and thickened nails in a person with neuropathy are where ulcers often start.
- **Early detection and fast escalation.** Spotting areas of inflammation/ pressure or a small break in the skin, then coordinating with nursing staff and the patient's physician right away.
- **Education that sticks.** Teaching residents, families, and caregivers what to look for, and recommending the right footwear.

What this looks like at Preferred Podiatry Group

Since 1973, Preferred Podiatry Group has brought podiatric care directly to residents of senior living and long-term care communities. Our podiatrists and advanced practice providers see patients on-site, where older adults with diabetes live, so problems are caught early instead of after a hospital visit.

Our team handles billing, scheduling, and quality reporting with our facility partners, so providers can spend their time on patients.

" One of my residents had a callus nobody had looked at in months. I took care of it that day, and six months later he still has no wound. Nobody throws a party for an ulcer that never happened, but that is the job, and I love it!”

" I see the same residents every few weeks. I know their stories and their families. When I catch something early and the nurses and I get ahead of it together, I know it mattered."

Why providers choose this work

For clinicians who want their work to matter, preventive diabetic foot care for older adults is hard to beat. You build long relationships with patients and the care teams around them.

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You see the results: fewer wounds, fewer hospital transfers, and residents who stay on their feet. And the outcome you are working toward is concrete: a patient who keeps walking.

This November, we are recognizing the DPMs, NPs, PAs, and care teams who do this work every day.

If you want to be one of them, we would like to meet you. PPG is hiring podiatrists and advanced practice providers in several locations. To see all locations or learn more, please visit us at our careers page or send us an email at Recruiting@ppgpc.com directly.