

A high-angle, action shot of a cowboy riding a brown horse during a rodeo event. The cowboy is wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt, light-colored pants, and a tan cowboy hat. He is leaning forward, holding onto the reins. The horse is in the middle of a bucking motion, with its front legs tucked up and its back legs kicking out. The ground is dark brown dirt. In the background, a crowd of spectators is visible behind a metal railing.

# senior lifestyle

June 2006

## PRESCOTT RODEO

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## Diabetes and your feet: Tips for summer

Article courtesy of the Arizona Institute of Footcare Physicians

**W**arm weather is here along with the urge to go barefoot. People with diabetes have to be particularly careful this time of year. "It is important for diabetics to pay special attention to their feet, because of their vulnerability to injury," said Dr. Kimberly Leach of the Arizona Institute of Footcare Physicians. It is imperative to protect feet at all times, and diabetes sufferers should not walk barefoot, even inside. Dr. Leach said, "It is also important to stay away from wearing sandals because dirt or pebbles can easily get inside the sandal and cause irritation and injury."

Wear protective footwear around swimming pools. The pavement surrounding pools can become extremely hot and can burn the soles of the feet. It is also important to check water temperature, especially in a hot tub, before going in. The water should be no warmer than 85 to 90 degrees. Leach also stated, "Many people with diabetes have a loss of feeling in their feet and could possibly suffer a burn and not even realize it, which could lead to even more problems."

Another source of injury can come from improper care of nails. Because toenails grow faster in hot weather, trim them more frequently and keep them short to help avoid ingrown nails. It is best to file nails straight across rather than cut them. If an ingrown nail does develop, people with diabetes should not attempt to remove it themselves. A minor cut can rapidly lead to a serious infection.

Diabetes can lead to foot problems in two ways: poor circulation and loss of feeling resulting from damaged nerves. This diminished feeling in the feet makes it difficult to detect problems, and cuts or bruises may go unnoticed. If this happens it could lead to infection, which in diabetics can lead to major problems like ulcers, gangrene and even amputation. Through day-to-day footcare and regular visits to a podiatrist, serious foot problems that plague people with diabetes can be minimized and, even more importantly, avoided.

If you are among the growing number of people suffering from Type II diabetes, here is some good news. By working with a qualified health care practitioner, there are things you can do that can reduce the amount of insulin and oral medications needed to manage the disease. Dr. Tina Marcantel, a naturopathic physician in Mesa, believes that you may even be able to decrease the complications of diabetes. When you are empowered by knowledge, you can learn to effectively manage this potentially devastating disease.

Many diabetic patients think their symptoms are "under control" because they are taking insulin and other oral medications that help keep their blood sugars within acceptable levels. "Medications are, of course, critical in the treatment of diabetes," said Dr. Marcantel. She believes, however, "if the patient does not commit to an active role in addressing the causes of diabetic problems, then the result may be an ever-increasing dependence on insulin or other medications, which have their own negative side effects over time."

In working with diabetic patients, Marcantel stresses four important factors. The first is education about the disease process. Understanding what diabetes is and what the effects can be on your body is critical. Without proper treatment, problems such as loss of vision, pain or numbness in the extremities, ulcers on the feet and damage to vital

organs can occur.

The next factor is developing a personalized meal plan. "You are what you eat" was never truer than when talking about diabetes. By understanding how certain foods affect your body and your blood sugars, it is possible to enjoy good meals while still controlling blood sugars and decreasing your weight.

Targeted nutritional supplements or botanical treatments can also be very helpful. Recent studies have shown these alternative therapies to be effective in decreasing blood pressure, lowering cholesterol and decreasing blood sugars, thus reducing potential organ damage.

Perhaps the most important factor in a treatment plan for diabetes is an ongoing monitoring and support program. Working with a health care provider who will spend time discussing your progress and modifying your treatment plan on a regular basis is critical to successfully managing your diabetes.

You don't have to be a "victim" of Type II diabetes. By being proactive and working with a knowledgeable physician, you can control your diabetes without letting it control you.

*Dr. Tina Marcantel is a naturopathic physician who has over 25 years experience working with diabetic patients as a physician and a registered nurse.*

### We'd Like To Point Out The Difference Bunion Surgery Can Make



**Why suffer from bunion pain?** If bunions are left untreated, they become larger and cause increased swelling and pain on the top, side and bottom of the big toe.

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Bunion surgery is performed as an out-patient procedure, covered by insurance, and patients are able to walk out after surgery.

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