

Katie Johnson: Good morning, and welcome to "Apple a Day," Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness segment, where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I have with me as my guest today Dr. Stephen Schmid. He is one of our podiatrists who's joining us for April, which is foot health month. Good morning, Dr. Schmid.

Stephen Schmid: Good morning.

Katie Johnson: When we think about our foot health, it's an important part of overall wellness, but one that might be overlooked. Tell us why it's important that we even pay attention to the health of our feet.

Stephen Schmid: Well first of all, I find that if your feet hurt, you hurt overall, so it's always important to take care of your feet, but there are a lot of other things with your feet that might give a good indication of your overall health [inaudible 00:00:41] the quality of your skin. There are certain things that we look for to see what kind of blood flow you have down to the feet as well as the feeling down in the feet, so oftentimes there are things that go on as a systemic or a full body process that can manifest or show itself in the feet first.

Katie Johnson: What are some of the most common health conditions that affect our feet, and maybe some of the most common misperceptions?

Stephen Schmid: Some common conditions, just general foot pain in the arch, if you have a flattening arch. Arthritis in the foot. The foot is a very, very complex part of the body. In fact, a third of all the bones in your body are located in the foot, so there are a lot of joints, a lot of complex motion of the foot, and if you have some of that motion that's just even a little bit off, I tell my patients it's like a tire in your car that's out of alignment. It'll wear faster than the other tires, so we see a lot of arthritis down in the feet, but I would say arthritis is one of the bigger components, but even just little things like warts or ingrown toenails, things like that, are pretty common to see. Plantar fasciitis, which is a good majority of the heel pain I see, is also really common.

Katie Johnson: When you talk about those common conditions, is there anything that we can do to instill good foot health in our children that will either delay or prevent some of those things you're talking about?

Stephen Schmid: Yeah. Some common things, make sure they're not running outside barefoot. It's a really common cause for injury to the foot. You can pick up warts, which are viruses, which are found in the environment that way. Also keeps the skin healthier if you have them covered, but things like wearing shoes that have a proper fit, not going with the cheapest shoes you can find. Ones that have a good amount of support and appropriate fit will really help support the foot and prevent some of these issues from happening down the line.

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Katie Johnson: When we talk about kids and sports, every sport seems to sell their sport specific shoe. Does that really make a difference?

Stephen Schmid: Yeah, actually, it does. Depending on the sport, you may need a little bit of support in one place or the other. Might need to be a little stiff in one spot and not the other, so it's good if you are trying to play sports at a little bit of a higher level, not just backyard play, to make sure that you have an appropriate fitting shoe for that specific sport to not only improve function, but also prevent injury.

Katie Johnson: So it's not just a marketing ploy, huh?

Stephen Schmid: No.

Katie Johnson: What about demographics? Is there one that's most commonly susceptible to foot health issues, gender, age, occupation?

Stephen Schmid: From a demographic standpoint, I find anywhere in the 50s to 60s on up, I think that's when a lot of these things tend to come out of the woodwork, so if you hadn't been wearing proper shoes your whole life, appropriate arch support, you start to see pain, changes, arthritis, things like that in the feet at that age group. I'd say that's probably my most common demographic that I see in the office.

Katie Johnson: What kind of risks do people take by leaving foot problems untreated?

Stephen Schmid: Well, if it's something new, something minor, it's a lot easier to treat than if you stick your head in the sand and wait until it becomes something major. Oftentimes what might be corrected very simply early on is a much more complex problem that takes a lot more correction, a lot more downtime, later on, so if you have a problem with your feet, if you have pain, it's something you should address right away and not wait until it becomes unbearable.

Katie Johnson: Speaking of complex. You have a new procedure that you're actually offering at Lake Region Healthcare, and that is total ankle replacement. Tell us more about what that procedure involves.

Stephen Schmid: Well, total ankle replacements are indicated for arthritis of the ankle. I do see a fair amount of arthritis here in the community. I actually held off on the procedure making sure that there is enough of a demand, and I found over the last few years that there absolutely is. Traditionally it's been either an ankle joint fusion or an ankle joint replacement, and I've done enough ankle joint fusions, but you want to try to preserve motion when you can, and it's a great procedure. It's becoming much more common to do in ankle, obviously very common in the knees and the hips. This newest generation of implants, the research behind it shows that they hold out much longer, very low complication rate compared to previous generations.

Katie Johnson: So how do you determine if ankle replacement is the right solution for a patient based on their age or the arthritis severity and those factors?

Stephen Schmid: Well, for an ankle joint replacement I'm looking for somebody who has what we consider end-stage ankle arthritis, meaning it's moderate to severe. They have to have good bone quality for the implant to grow into the bone and hold in place, but I'm also looking at the patient as a whole, making sure the patient is healthy enough for the surgery, looking for somebody who is not very overweight. It's more indicated for people who want to retain that motion, remain active, but they're not too active. They're not a marathon runner. So it's for typically, on average, 60s on up in terms of age and those that want to remain active but aren't too active.

Katie Johnson: Well, certainly very exciting to be offering that new option for patients who have that need in their ankles. As we think about foot health month, do you have one last key takeaway message about foot health that you'd like to leave with our listeners this morning?

Stephen Schmid: Well, I think it's really important to check your feet once a day, look for signs of calluses, blisters, wear and tear, especially if you are diabetic. That is the big demographic that tends to have major foot problems that can be completely prevented if they take care of it ahead of time. It's all about prevention, wearing the right shoes, wearing socks in your shoes, looking out for your feet, because you'll find that if your feet hurt, then you just don't do well overall, so the motto of Lake Region Healthcare is there's so much to do here, stay healthy for it, and same thing goes with your feet.

Katie Johnson: Absolutely, so I just have to ask, check your feet once a day. Once you do that, how do you know when you should see a doctor for your foot problems?

Stephen Schmid: Well, there are some over-the-counter items, arch supports, different types of pads and things if you do have a callus, if you do have something going on. If it's something very minor, most people can address it at home, but if it becomes something where you're trying to treat it at home, it's still painful, it doesn't seem like it's improving, that's a good indication to come in and see somebody about it.

Katie Johnson: We're lucky to have both you and Dr. Naomi Schmid, our team of podiatrists at Lake Region Healthcare, here for those foot health needs. Dr. Stephen Schmid, podiatrist at Lake Region Healthcare, my guest today, talking about foot health month and the new service of total ankle replacement being offered at Lake Region Healthcare. Thank you very much, Dr. Schmid.

Stephen Schmid: Thank you, Katie.

Katie Johnson: And Dr. Schmid and Katie Johnson both reminding you that there is so much to do here, stay healthy for it. Have a great day.

