

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day Lake Region Healthcare's Health and Wellness segment we feature weekly to share information and tips with you on how to live a healthier lifestyle and learn from the health and wellness experts at Lake Region Healthcare. This is Katie Johnson and joining me as my guest today is Dr. Steven Schmid. He is a podiatrist at Lake Region Healthcare and here to talk with us about foot health because April is National Foot Health Month. Good morning, Dr. Schmid.

Dr. Schmid: Good morning.

Katie Johnson: Let's talk a little bit about why it's important to pay attention to our foot health.

Dr. Schmid: I think many people write off the foot as a secondary concern when it comes to their health. Once they develop pain to the foot and lose their ability to perform their normal daily functions, they quickly realize that their feet are an important part of their overall well-being. If you're not able to use your feet, a lot of times other health problems can become more of an issue.

Katie Johnson: I think of it as being your back. You don't really realize how central it is to your overall well-being and mobility until you have a problem with it.

Dr. Schmid: I agree with that. I have patients that come in that have foot pain. It really prevents them from doing normal daily activities, things like exercise, keeping themselves healthy. Once we're able to fix that, they're very happy with their abilities at that point.

Katie Johnson: Absolutely. What are some of the most common health conditions that affect our feet?

Dr. Schmid: Foot health is often an early indicator of a person's overall health. There are certain systemic conditions that often manifest themselves in the feet first. Diabetes and peripheral arterial disease are some of the most common systemic conditions that do affect the feet. If they're not monitored and treated appropriately, even the smallest problem of the foot with these conditions could lead to serious complications and even amputation.

Katie Johnson: Are there some common misperceptions too about foot health?

Dr. Schmid: Again, some people feel that problems with their feet are a secondary concern, and little changes here and there aren't that important. What they need to realize is that there are a lot of more serious underlying conditions that manifest themselves in the foot first. Often times we're able to diagnose things like diabetes or peripheral arterial disease just based on the condition of the feet and going with further testing after that.

Katie Johnson: Are there certain demographics that are more commonly susceptible to foot health issues?

Dr. Schmid: Again, diabetics I think are the most susceptible to foot problems. They can develop any foot problem that a non-diabetic may have. However, they're also more prone to ulcers and infection. Usually it has to do with the development of what's called neuropathy, which is essentially damage to the nerve endings from high blood sugar. They lose the ability to feel in their feet pain, and that sensory feedback is a very important part of your overall foot health. In addition, diabetes are more prone to other conditions like peripheral arterial disease, which can further complicate their care.

Katie Johnson: As far as demographics, does age play a factor? The older we get the more wear and tear we have on our feet. I imagine we're more likely to see more issues as we age, or is that a misperception?

Dr. Schmid: No, that's certainly true. Many of my patients come and say, "Getting old is never fun, don't do it," but most of us don't have a choice. Certainly, small problems over time can snowball and become bigger problems as we get older, positional problems with the foot. Some of the genetic changes of the foot that are fairly common will manifest themselves mostly in the early 50s, mid-60s. We start to see more foot problems in our older population, and certainly the older you get and the more miles you put on your feet, the more problems you have.

Katie Johnson: What are certain symptoms we should look for, and when do we know that it's time to see a physician?

Dr. Schmid: Pain in your feet is not normal. If you do have foot pain, try not to ignore it. First try switching to a more supportive pair of shoes. If it doesn't work, you may need to see a podiatrist. This time of year heel pain is a common complaint as people become more active as the weather gets nicer. It may be due to a condition called plantar fasciitis, which usually requires a multi-factorial treatment and approach to treat that appropriately.

Katie Johnson: We talked a little bit about the risks of leaving foot problems untreated. Are there other possible repercussions the longer you leave a foot problem maybe ignored?

Dr. Schmid: Certainly. Actually, often foot problems can be treated conservatively or very simply in the early stages. If you leave it unchecked they can progress, which often requires a higher level of care, more care, more visits and more time in order to heal that.

Katie Johnson: More expense, I'm sure, goes along with that too. How about tips to keep our feet healthy and prevent these foot problems from happening in the first place? I'm sure there are some proactive things that we can do.

Dr. Schmid: Certainly, wearing a pair of supportive shoes can be helpful and avoid flip flops. That's really big in lake country coming into the summer. Too often I have patients that come into my office complaining of foot pain, and they come into the office wearing a pair of really nonsupportive shoes, minimalist shoes or cheap sandals. If

you don't give your feet the proper support they need, don't expect them to support you back.

Katie Johnson: Do you have any other tips for picking out the right shoe? Like you said, especially this time of year we're becoming more active. We have hundreds of people participating in our community health challenge. We're hearing a lot of stories about people being out, and more active and maybe realizing how important it is to have the right shoe. What do you look for?

Dr. Schmid: Certainly, the right shoe plays an important role. I often get asked what shoes are the best to wear. Unfortunately, there's no good answer for that. It really depends on what you're doing, your foot structure and what you're using the shoe for. Running shoes tend to be more flexible while walking shoes have a stiffer sole. The type of work you do will dictate what kind of shoe you need. I caution against buying shoes at the end of the day. Chances are whatever shoe you try on will feel better than the pair you've been wearing all day. Try the shoe out in the store. Walk around for 10 to 15 minutes. Does it feel comfortable? Comfortability is a good indication of the fit of the shoe. You should also compare at least 2 to 3 shoes before making your choice. What might feel good initially doesn't feel quite as good as some of those other shoes.

Katie Johnson: Can I ask about socks too? My experience has been a good sock makes a big difference.

Dr. Schmid: Socks can make a difference, something with a little bit more cushion to it. For my diabetic patients there are diabetic socks, which we do sell at our medical supply store here in town. Those socks have a certain design that does help with our diabetic patients. Certainly, when you are wearing shoes, any closed toed or closed heeled shoes you should be wearing a sock with it.

Katie Johnson: I just want to mention too, you mentioned peripheral artery disease. I talked about the community health challenge. It's a good time to mention that we have the Community Health Expo coming up on April 28, and peripheral artery disease is one of the screenings that's being offered for free at that event. If that is something that might be a concern to a listener, I would encourage you to stop out there. I believe you're also planning to be at the expo at the Ask a Doctor booth. Is that right?

Dr. Schmid: That's right. I've actually participated the last few years. It's been a popular booth. They typically have a line running and plenty of foot questions. Everybody comes up and has some sort of foot question. I'd be happy to answer any questions that they have at the time.

Katie Johnson: That's great that you make yourself available there. We haven't mentioned your wife. You and Naomi, Dr. Naomi Schmid, both are podiatrists here at Lake Region Healthcare and have been with us now for a few years. I'm curious to know how it's working out practicing as a husband and wife and moving to a new community and

how you ended up actually both practicing together.

Dr. Schmid: We met in school, and I guess they say, "The rest is history." We were looking at opportunities in both Minnesota, Montana. Lake Region contacted us, and we came by. It seemed like a really good fit. It's a nice community, great to raise a family in. We currently have a 2-year-old daughter, and we have another one on the way due in June. We wanted to bring them to a community that was very family-oriented. Fergus Falls fits that really well. Working at Lake Region has been great. The collaborative atmosphere of the hospital and the physician group has just been fantastic and really second to none. Practicing has been going well. Both of us have been quite busy, and fairly well-established after being here for just a short period of time, and really enjoying working together and working here at Lake Region.

Katie Johnson: That's great to hear. You've certainly been a fabulous addition to the Lake Region Healthcare family and services that we are making available to our community to meet their health needs and help to make Fergus Falls one of the healthiest places to live and raise your family. Thank you for joining us today, as we talk about foot health during April National Foot Health Month, Dr. Steven Schmid, podiatrist, along with Dr. Naomi Schmid here at Lake Region Healthcare. Thanks again for being with us today.

Dr. Schmid: Thank you, Katie.

Katie Johnson: A reminder to step out and see Dr. Schmid at our Lake Region Healthcare Community Health Expo coming up April 28 at the Bigwood Event Center. This is Katie Johnson along with Dr. Steve Schmid reminding you there is so much to do here. Stay health for it. Have a great day.