

MEDIA RELEASE

Canadian Diabetes Association urges action to prevent amputations in people with diabetes

HAMILTON, ONT. (JULY 2, 2015) – Now that summer is here and Ontarian feet are out in the open, the Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA) is urging action to reduce the risk of diabetes-related foot complications that can lead to devastating consequences, including amputations.

The CDA is calling on governments to improve access to publicly funded diabetes services and devices to prevent and treat foot ulcers and thereby avoid amputation in people with diabetes. These supports include foot care education, professionally fitted footwear and devices, and timely referrals and visits to a foot care specialist.

Hamilton resident Wayne Sidsworth knows first-hand the worst case scenario of foot complications. The 56-year-old was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at the relatively late age of 37, and had ongoing problems with his foot and leg. An avid golfer, he began to experience pain in his calf while walking in 2009 and underwent a series of vascular surgeries. In 2012, a sore on his foot quickly spread, causing gangrene and resulting in the amputation of his right leg below the knee.

“I always knew a serious complication like amputation was a possibility, but I never thought it would happen to me,” said Sidsworth. He believes the delay in getting a diabetes diagnosis may have been part of the cause. “By then, the damage was already done,” he added.

Sidsworth is determined to pursue an active lifestyle, continuing to play golf with the aid of a cart. At the top of his wish list is a special foot that would enable him to resume running, but the price tag is \$9,000 and it isn't covered under extended health insurance. Fortunately, some of his other expenses have been covered – including a \$9,000 prosthetic leg and a \$6,000 wheel chair. He estimates that his condition has cost upwards of \$100,000 in medical-related expenses.

According to the CDA, out-of-pocket costs compromise the ability of Canadians with diabetes to manage their disease: 57 per cent indicate that they do not comply with their prescribed therapy due to the cost of medications, devices and supplies. Only half of Canadians with type 2 diabetes have their blood glucose levels under control, and the majority of patients incur adverse health conditions linked to diabetes.

The call to action stems from the CDA's newly released [position statement on amputation prevention](#). The statement notes that diabetes is the leading cause of non-traumatic lower limb amputation in Canadian adults, associated with approximately 70 per cent of amputations performed in hospital.

“Compared to the general population, Canadian adults with diabetes are over 20 times more likely to undergo non-traumatic lower limb amputations, 85 per cent of which are preceded by a foot ulcer,” says Dr. Jan Hux, chief science officer at the CDA. “Many people with diabetes experience barriers to preventative care, so investment in prevention and support is essential to avoid amputations which are devastating to people with diabetes, as well as extremely costly to our publicly funded health care system.”

The CDA is also calling on people living with diabetes and their health-care providers to be vigilant and proactive about foot complications from diabetes. The CDA is urging people with the disease to check feet daily for cuts, cracks, bruises, blisters, sores, infection and unusual markings. The CDA is recommending that health-care professionals who treat people with diabetes screen them for diabetic neuropathy and peripheral vascular disease, and educate them about proper foot care and glycemic control. The CDA is also calling for improved treatment and communication among all health-care professionals who work with people with diabetes.

Diabetes in Ontario:

In 2015, the number of Ontarians with type 1 and 2 diabetes was estimated at 1.5 million with projections to 2.3 million by 2025. The estimated cost of diabetes to the province will be \$6 billion and is projected to increase to \$7.7 billion in 2025.

Diabetes in Canada:

Diabetes will cost Canada \$14 billion in 2015 and these costs are projected to rise to \$16 billion by 2020. Diabetes has reached epidemic proportions in Canada. Currently, more than one in four Canadians has diabetes or prediabetes. If trends continue, this will increase to one in three by 2020. Complications – such as those involving feet – account for more than 80 per cent of diabetes costs, yet may be prevented or at least delayed.

To view the CDA position statement, go to: <http://www.diabetes.ca/about-cda/public-policy-position-statements/amputation-prevention>.

About the CDA

The CDA is the registered national charity that helps the more than 10 million Canadians with diabetes or prediabetes live healthy lives, and educates those at risk while working to find a cure. In communities across Canada, the CDA:

- offers a wide array of support services to members of the public;
- offers resources to health-care professionals on best practices to care for people with diabetes;
- advocates to governments, schools, workplaces and others on behalf of people with diabetes; and,
- funds research on better treatments and to find a cure.

For more information, visit diabetes.ca or call **1-800-BANTING (226-8464)**.

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