



Warning for those with peripheral neuropathy

Randy leads a busy life, volunteering at Blake Hospital two mornings a week and running a household.

FHCN photo by Nerissa Johnson

Randy Fortiner had already lost the small toe on his left foot to peripheral neuropathy, a condition caused by damage to the nerves in the peripheral nervous system that

usually begins in the hands or feet with symptoms of numbness, tingling, or a feeling of shooting pain.

“I have diabetes,” explains Randy, “and I had just had a toe amputated when I read an

article in *Florida Health Care News* about Dr. Starrett.” Clare H. Starrett, DPM, is a board-certified podiatrist with offices in Bradenton and on Anna Maria Island. “I realized that I needed help taking care of my feet, so I scheduled an appointment with her.”

“I first saw Randy about two years ago,” remembers Dr. Starrett. “He came to me during the healing phase of his amputation. Because Randy has peripheral neuropathy, he has no pain sensation in the bottom of his feet.”

Because of this lack of pain sensation, patients with peripheral neuropathy are very prone to injuries on their feet.

“I saw Dr. Starrett periodically so that she could help me monitor my feet,” recalls Randy, “and everything went along fine for about a year. Then one day I foolishly wore my strapped sandals to the beach and got a blister on my right little toe.”

“When most people get a small stone or even a grain of sand in their shoes, they walk differently,” reminds Dr. Starrett. “They protect the area, avoiding the pain.

“People who lack pain sensation will walk on it all day. They are not aware when they get a blister or splinter or another form of injury, and the injury can quickly develop into a chronic wound.”

Randy’s blister, which mirrored the injury on his left foot,

swiftly developed into an ulcer and then into a chronic wound.

“Dr. Starrett saved my toe by surgically removing the part of the bone that was infected,”



Island Podiatry

Clare H. Starrett, DPM

A nonhealing wound requires medical attention.

If you have a scratch, scrape, or injury that does not heal within one month, wait no longer. Seek medical attention.

says Randy. “It’s amazing.”

“Once the infected bone was removed, the wound healed,” adds Dr. Starrett, “but Randy’s experience underscores just how careful people with peripheral neuropathy must be. He is a very careful, conscientious person, but this is an ongoing problem patients must stay on top of.”

Causes and issues

According to Dr. Starrett, when peripheral neuropathy is generalized to the hands and feet, it is usually metabolic. “It could be due to high blood sugar, as in a

diabetic, or to certain vitamin deficiencies or to exposure to toxic chemicals. Anemia or autoimmune diseases can also cause it.

“If peripheral neuropathy is brought on by one of those metabolic causes, it can sometimes be reversed. Once the anemia is corrected or the vitamin deficiency is reversed, then the peripheral neuropathy may go away.

“However, for patients with peripheral neuropathy, it is critical that they seek medical help immediately with any sore on their foot, because we know that something the size of a pimple can develop into a bone infection.” **FHCN**—Kris Kline

Are you experiencing foot pain?

If you are diabetic, or if you are experiencing foot pain, call Dr. Starrett. She welcomes questions regarding all aspects of foot care or podiatric procedures. Dr. Starrett maintains offices at 2722 Manatee Ave. West in Bradenton and at 104 Crescent Dr. on Anna Maria Island. For further information or to schedule an appointment, phone (941) 779-1100.



Clare H. Starrett, DPM, is a board-certified podiatrist, a fellow of the American College of Foot Orthopedics and Podiatric Medicine, and an associate of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgery. She received her undergraduate degree from Rutgers University and graduated from Temple University School of Podiatric Medicine, Philadelphia, PA, where she later served on the faculty and as department chair of Podiatric Orthopedics. Dr. Starrett completed her surgical residency at Metropolitan Hospital, Philadelphia. She is the former director of clinical services for the Foot & Ankle Institute, Philadelphia, and has lectured on foot orthopedics at major universities in the United States and Spain.