FAST FACTS: Foot Pain

The foot is an extremely complex anatomical structure made up of 26 bones, 33 joints, 19 muscles, 107 ligaments, plus nerves, blood vessels, and connective tissue. The American Diabetes Association reports that about 50% of people with diabetes have some form of nerve damage that may cause numbness and burning sensation in the feet known as peripheral neuropathy.

Causes of foot pain include:

- Injuries such as sprains, strains, bruises, & fractures
- Diseases such as diabetes, Hansen disease, peripheral vascular disease (atherosclerosis)
- Infectious causes such as bacteria, viruses, fungi (plantar warts & athlete's foot)
- Inflammation such as gout, calcaneal spurs, plantar fasciitis, arthritis, acute & chronic osteoarthritis
- Structural problems such as ingrown toenails

Nursing Assessment should consist of:

- Visual inspection of foot
- Palpation of foot & toes
- Observation of movement and/or ambulation
- Testing for numbness
- Determining limitations of range of motion

The types, causes, exact location and severity (i.e. sharp pain versus a dull ache) are good discriminators of the type of foot problem. CNA’s should be encouraged to report any abnormalities of the foot and document on the appropriate form.

Treatment of foot pain

- Will depend on the cause of the pain & may involve medication, strengthening, stretching, & possibly the use of and physical therapy.
- Minor foot pain can usually be treated with rest, ice, compression, and elevation & OTC medications such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen.
- Severe pain should be treated by a medical professional.
- Encourage mobility, routine podiatry care with nail trimming, good hygiene & weight loss may be indicated.

References