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My Dad's Feet

TERESA BENGE, RN, CDE

The average child does not notice their father's feet, I know this to be true. If I am honest, I am not sure why I did, although I've always been told I have powerful intuition.

It was the summer after fourth grade and I was stuck 7 miles out in the country without air conditioning, cable television, or something so omnipotent as the Internet. It could be that thoughts bubble over in such mind-numbing circumstances.

I'm not sure why foot massage became my passion that summer, but it did. My father was in heaven. He spent his days in steel-toe boots on concrete floors. Before I knew it I was blowing my allowance on Dr. Scholl's foot cream and various clippers and files, and my fan base was growing. Aunts and uncles and even neighbors were trying to get in on the action. Everybody was saying I would become one of those—what are they called?—foot doctors.

Years later, upon hearing my father would lose a foot to diabetes, I took it like a blow to the stomach.

As a diabetes educator, I teach people how to prevent this scenario. As a diabetes educator, I tell people to look at the bottom of their feet every day and to act on any opening in the skin sooner versus later. As a diabetes educator, I tell them not to go barefoot even in the house, to put a pair of indoor shoes by the door and slip them on to protect those "pigs" all the way home. As a diabetes educator, I am rooting for them. ■

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