

Innovative Treatments for Diabetic and Other Forms of Neuropathy

By Cortese Foot and Ankle Clinic

We are lucky to be living at a time when new treatments for medical conditions are being introduced at a rapid pace. Many medical problems that had few solutions several years ago can now be treated with excellent results. Such is the case with peripheral neuropathy.

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What is peripheral neuropathy?

Peripheral neuropathy is a result of damage to the peripheral nervous system — the vast communications network that transmits information between the brain and spinal cord to every other part of the body. Neuropathy means nerve disease or damage. There are close to 300 causes of neuropathy, and approximately 21 million Americans are affected by this condition.

Symptoms and diagnosis

Symptoms can range from numbness or tingling, to sharp electrical-like pain, to muscle weakness and balance problems. Areas of the body may become abnormally sensitive to touch, leading to an intense experience of pain in response to a stimulus that does not normally provoke pain. For example, some may experience pain from bed sheets draped lightly over the body. In diabetic neuropathy, the first nerve fibers to malfunction are the ones that travel the furthest from the brain and the spinal cord. Pain and numbness are first felt in the feet followed by a gradual progression up both legs. Later, the fingers, hands, and arms may become affected.

Symptoms may be experienced over a period of days, weeks, or years; they may appear suddenly, progress rapidly, and resolve slowly as damaged nerves heal, or they may begin subtly and progress slowly. Some people may have periods of relief followed by relapse. Others may reach a plateau stage where symptoms stay the same for many months or years.

Most often, a doctor is able to diagnose peripheral neuropathy solely on a patient’s description of symptoms, and a simple neurological examination. Many people with the

condition may not even have any symptoms of neuropathy: in this case, a doctor may order special nerve tests to assess the functioning of the small and large nerve fibers. These tests help determine whether you have neuropathy, the specific nerves involved, and the severity of your symptoms.



Treatment

The first step in treating peripheral neuropathy is to address any contributing causes such as infection, toxin exposure, medication-related toxicity, vitamin deficiencies, hormonal deficiencies, autoimmune disorders, or compression that can lead to neuropathy. Peripheral nerves have the ability to regenerate axons, as long as the nerve cell itself has not died. Correcting an underlying condition often can result in the neuropathy resolving on its own as the nerves recover or regenerate.

The adoption of healthy lifestyle habits, such as maintaining optimal weight, avoiding exposure to toxins, exercising, eating a balanced diet, correcting vitamin deficiencies, and limiting or avoiding alcohol consumption can reduce the effects of peripheral neuropathy. Self-care skills such as meticulous foot care and careful wound treatment in people with diabetes is important. Strict control of blood glucose levels has been shown to reduce neuropathic symptoms and help people with diabetic neuropathy avoid further nerve damage.

Two new FDA approved procedures, Combination Electroanalgesia Therapy (CET), have shown great promise as an effective treatment solution for diabetic and other forms of neuropathy. The procedures used in the CET protocol are an ankle block, performed with local medication, and Electronic Signal Treatment (EST), as delivered by a unique sophisticated electromedical wave generator, specifically invented for neuropathy and several types of neuro-muscular pain. CET is showing tremendous results in the immediate treatment of neuropathy symptoms and has positive overall long-term benefits, without regression of neuropathy symptoms.

Neuropathic pain is a common, often difficult to control symptom of sensory nerve damage and can negatively affect overall quality of life. If you are experiencing any symptoms of peripheral neuropathy, see a physician right away. They will diagnose and treat you with the least invasive, most effective therapy available with the goal being to successfully manage both short-term and long-term pain.

For more information on CET treatment for peripheral neuropathy, or any foot problems, contact Cortese Foot & Ankle Clinic at 309-452-3000, or visit them online at www.Cortesefootandankle.com. They are located at 1607 Visa Dr., Suite 5B in Normal.