

# Information on Neuropathy

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We all have nerve endings (a section of the peripheral nervous system) that lead from your brain and spinal cord (central nervous system) that send signals to and from your feet. When these nerves are severed from degeneration, vital messages sent to and from your feet can be disrupted.

Impairment to peripheral nerves that lead to the feet can cause those who suffer from neuropathy in their feet to sustain pins and needles and burning sensations in their feet. These sensations can become very painful and unbearable. Having diabetes disease makes people more susceptible to complications with peripheral neuropathy. In other circumstances, the peripheral neuropathy is coupled with outside factors, such as toxic substances, that are responsible for reducing oxygen levels in your body.

## How to Prevent Neuropathy in Your Feet

The smartest way to prevent neuropathy in your feet is to be cognizant of the potential causes (diabetes, toxins, medications) and do your best to avoid these situations. However, this is not always possible, but even if you already have diabetes or have been exposed to hazardous toxins, you can still help reduce the amount of damage you incur by keeping a close eye on your feet and by reporting any critical symptoms (like burning, tingling, or numbness) to your podiatrist.

## Living with Neuropathy in Your Feet

Your podiatrist can prescribe medicine and other kinds of treatments for neuropathy in your feet. You will need to stop smoking and get rid of any other sources that will exhaust your body of its oxygen supply. Regularly schedule your podiatrist's appointments to evaluate your blood sugar levels and oxygen levels through blood tests.

Medication is used to treat some cases of neuropathy in feet.

The weather and change of seasons can cause more problems for those who are suffering from neuropathy in the feet. When the nerves to the feet are damaged, the feet may not feel hot and cold sensations. Lots of people have suffered frostbite or burns because their feet are unable to recognize cold or heat.

## Signs and Symptoms of Neuropathy

While every person's experience with peripheral neuropathy can be as unique as the individual himself or herself, there are some common neuropathy signs and symptoms shared by most individuals. The symptoms of diabetic or peripheral neuropathy start in the toes and feet (right and left). In some patients the symptoms gradually rise up the calves and into the knees. This is called a stocking pattern. Then, in some the symptoms may also begin in the fingers and hands — causing a stocking and glove pattern. It cannot be predicted how any one's symptoms will spread. In some patients, the pain does not spread beyond the toes or feet and there is no progression; in others, the progression to calves and hands occurs in months, rapidly; and yet in others the spread is very gradual, over many years. There are three categories of nerves and up to five specific peripheral nerves that may be affected, and symptoms depend on these nerves and their location:

Patients who develop pain with peripheral neuropathy describe the pain using a variety of words, including “burning,” “throbbing,” “deep ache,” “raw skin,” “skin sensitivity,” “tingling,” “sharp,” “electric-like,” “pins and needles,” “freezing cold,” “like walking on ground glass,” “itchy,” and others. Some patients say they don't have pain but have unpleasant and irritating sensations (Allodynia), which may include “itching,” “buzzing,” “like bugs crawling,” “like leather or sand paper,” “hard ball on bottom of feet”, and “aching. Some people feel like they have socks on, even though they are barefoot. Over time, this feeling can spread to the legs and hands.

Patients may find it harder and harder to walk. Their legs feel heavy and they may have to drag themselves up the stairs. Some patients have constant pains, day and night, whereas others only have noticeable pain at bedtime. Often, patients may complain that the pain interferes with their sleep and they may develop Restless Leg Syndrome and or Insomnia (difficulty sleeping). As with all chronic pain, patients with painful peripheral neuropathy may also develop depression. Patients with advanced neuropathy may also have trouble with their sense of positioning; and therefore, have difficulty with their gait or balance.