

# Peripheral Neuropathy

## Peripheral Neuropathy

Peripheral neuropathy is a disease that damages nerves in your feet and hands. The most common cause of peripheral neuropathy is diabetes. Other causes include prolonged pressure on nerves, injuries, tumors or other diseases.

A major risk of peripheral neuropathy is serious injury to your feet because you may not be able to feel pain in them.

- Broken or fractured foot bones. If you can't feel a broken bone, you may continue to walk on it, causing more injury and improper healing. The result could be a deformed foot.
- Open sores (ulcers). Small skin problems on your foot can lead to major infections, gangrene (dead tissue) or amputation in severe cases. If you develop a deformed foot, footwear that doesn't fit properly may rub and cause open sores.

If you develop peripheral neuropathy, it is important that you take good care of your feet to prevent complications (problems).

## Signs of Peripheral Neuropathy

The most common signs include:

- numbness or loss of feeling that starts in your feet or hands
- abnormal sensations such as tingling, burning or prickling feet or hands

- minor to severe pain in your legs, feet, arms or hands
- weak muscles.

## Treating Peripheral Neuropathy

There is no cure for peripheral neuropathy but there are treatments to prevent it from getting worse. The treatment your health care provider chooses depends on the cause of your peripheral neuropathy. Depending on your situation, your health care provider may recommend one or more of the following:

- controlling your blood glucose level if you have diabetes
- using splints or surgical decompression to remove pressure on nerves
- surgically repairing injuries or removing tumors.

## Preventing Foot Complications from Peripheral Neuropathy

It is important to take good care of your feet to prevent small problems from getting worse.

- Check your feet every day. Look for changes in your skin, even between your toes. Contact your health care provider right away if you see any wound or notice any swelling, warmth or redness.
- Check the temperature of bath water before you step into it. Use your elbow to make sure the water is not too hot.

- Wear footwear that fits properly. Your health care provider may recommend custom-fit shoes or inserts if you develop a deformed foot.
- See your health care provider if you have calluses, corns or an ingrown toenail.

**Information adapted in part from the  
National Institute of Neurological  
Disorders and Stroke.**

## **If You Have Diabetes**

People with diabetes are at a high risk for developing peripheral neuropathy and its complications. Controlling your blood glucose is the best way to prevent peripheral neuropathy. Other steps you can take include:

- keep your blood pressure under control
- exercise on a regular basis
- don't smoke
- limit how much alcohol you drink
- eat healthful foods, including fruits and vegetables
- see your health care provider on a regular basis.