

Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathic Pain

What is diabetic peripheral neuropathic pain?

Diabetic peripheral neuropathy is a common nerve problem in people with diabetes. It usually affects the feet and legs. It may cause a loss of feeling or pain.

What causes it?

Over time, high levels of sugar in your blood damage the nerves in your body. The nerves farthest away from your brain begin to die first, such as those in your fingers and toes. The longer you have diabetes and the higher your blood sugar levels, the more likely you are to have diabetic peripheral neuropathy with pain.

How do I know if I have it?

If you notice pain or loss of feeling in your feet or legs, talk to your doctor. He or she may do a simple test to check your feet for loss of feeling as part of your regular check-up. You may need to have special tests to check the nerves in your legs.

How is it treated?

There are several medicines used to treat the pain. You and your doctor will discuss which medicine is best for you.

What can I expect?

Many patients can lessen their pain by taking medicine, but very few patients will ever be pain free. Your sleep and quality of life may improve greatly. Taking medicine and controlling your blood sugar levels will help.

How can I prevent this pain?

Control your blood sugar levels. High levels of sugar in the blood will make the pain worse. It is important to work with your doctor to improve your diet and adjust your medicines to keep your diabetes under control.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

American Academy of Family Physicians
Web site: <http://familydoctor.org/050.xml>

American Diabetes Association
Web site: <http://www.diabetes.org>

National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse
Web site: <http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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