



Neuropathy

Nerve damage caused by diabetes is called neuropathy, and occurs when there is a gradual loss of sensation. Neuropathy usually affects the legs and feet, and sometimes the arms and hands. The most common cause of neuropathy in people with diabetes is long-term, uncontrolled blood glucose levels.

The most common symptoms of neuropathy are abnormal sensations in the legs and feet, and may include:

- sharp, shooting pains
- burning
- tingling
- a feeling of being pricked with pins
- throbbing
- numbness (unable to properly feel pain, heat, or cold)

A healthcare professional will check the sensitivity of the nerves in your feet using a monofilament (a short piece of nylon – like a hairbrush bristle – mounted on a wand). If you have diabetes, your healthcare professional should check your feet regularly.

It is important to know if you have neuropathy because, with proper footwear and regular monitoring of your feet, you can prevent some of the negative consequences of neuropathy, such as diabetic foot ulcers.

People with normal sensation are constantly moving to take pressure off their feet and avoid putting pressure on areas that may cause pain. However, people who do not have normal sensation will continue to walk

on areas that are sore or damaged and this can cause wounds, worsening the damage. Individuals with neuropathy can further injure their feet by wearing poorly fitting shoes or walking on items like a tack or a piece of glass and not realize it.

You can prevent some of the possible side effects of living with neuropathy – such as diabetic foot ulcers – by being fitted with proper footwear, checking your feet at least once every day (use a mirror if you cannot see the bottom of your feet) and visiting your healthcare professional immediately if you suspect something is wrong.

Neuropathy presents many challenges. However, with the right choices you can protect your feet and enjoy life to its fullest!