

“Sensational” Feet

Diabetic neuropathy occurs in 40 to 50% of patients with both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. It can affect the cardiac, genitourinary and gastrointestinal systems, but the most common complaint is its effects on the sensory and motor neurons, typically of the fingers and toes.

Symptoms of neuropathy include aching, burning, cold sensation, numbness and tingling. Sharp pain and pain that arises from a simple touch such as that felt with clothing or bed sheets against the skin may also occur. Many people will experience the inability to manipulate or even feel small objects. Eventually there is an inability to sense pain or gauge temperature and as a result injuries occur. If injury occurs to the foot, ulcers can form which if left untreated can lead to gangrene and amputation.

Prevention should always be the first step in delaying or preventing the progression of neuropathy. Controlling blood sugar levels is important, as is proper foot care.

- ✚ Don't wear tight socks, high heels, pointy shoes, sandals or worn out shoes. Instead choose comfortable yet supportive, professionally fitted shoes that don't rub or pinch.
- ✚ Don't ever go barefoot, even indoors.
- ✚ Avoid the use of heating pads on your feet.
- ✚ Don't cross your legs for prolonged periods of time.
- ✚ Refrain from smoking.
- ✚ Have pedicures from healthcare professionals only
- ✚ Elevate your feet when sitting.
- ✚ Wiggle your toes and move ankles around several times a day to improve blood flow.
- ✚ Exercise regularly.
- ✚ Inspect your feet daily

There are many over-the-counter and prescription remedies to treat the pain of diabetic neuropathy including pain relievers such as acetaminophen and antiinflammatories such as ibuprofen. The latter should be used with caution in people with poor kidney function. Capsaicin, (from chili peppers) as well as a homeopathic remedy called Neuragen® have also shown to be helpful in relieving pain. For more severe cases, prescription pain relievers containing codeine or medications specifically formulated for neuropathic pain are available.