

FOOTPRINTS

AN INFORMATIONAL NEWSLETTER FOR PATIENTS OF APMA MEMBER PODIATRISTS

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SPECIAL EDITION

D iabetes has become an epidemic of massive proportions, with more than 30 million Americans affected by the disease. Research indicates up to 70 percent of the diabetic population will develop diabetic peripheral neuropathy, or nerve damage in their feet.

Nerve damage can be caused in a variety of ways—by cutting, compressing, or poisoning the nerve so that messages from your brain can't reach other parts of your body. In the case of diabetic nerve damage, high blood sugar (and in some cases, very low blood sugar) effectively poisons the nerves. As a result, you may feel burning, tingling, or numbness that can dramatically affect your quality of life.

According to APMA member podiatrist Priya Parthasarathy, DPM, it's critical to include today's podiatrist on your diabetes care team to prevent and treat complications like nerve damage.

“Your podiatrist provides diabetes and neuropathy care related to your feet,” Dr. Parthasarathy said. “Things like tingling, numbness, and sores on your feet (ulcers) are not normal and deserve attention right away.”

Your podiatrist can work with other members of your care team to help prevent neuropathy. But if you do develop nerve damage, your podiatrist will recommend ways to help protect your feet. Nerve damage can prevent you from feeling sores or injuries. As a result, podiatrists recommend you never go barefoot. Your podiatrist can also recommend socks and footwear specific to your needs.

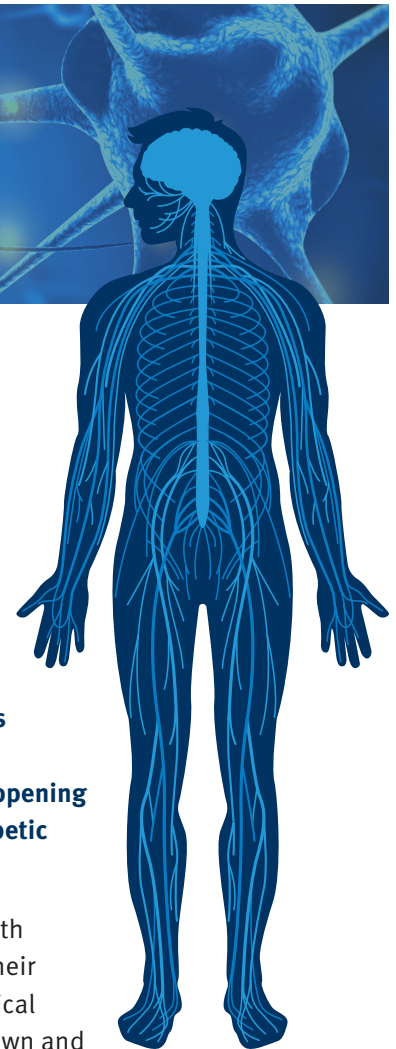
Although nerve damage is usually permanent once it happens, there are treatments that may help to ease your symptoms. Dr. Parthasarathy notes that topical compounding creams can be a go-to treatment method

as an alternative to pills. These creams have nerve agents that can ease pain or numbness.

Dr. Parthasarathy also recommends simple steps such as daily foot checks. “The first thing I suggest to patients is checking their feet every single day,” Dr. Parthasarathy said. “This is important to identify cuts and infections you may not feel happening due to the development of diabetic peripheral neuropathy.”

It is also important for those with diabetes to carefully manage their blood sugar and increase physical activity, which keeps weight down and improves circulation. Because nerve damage affects the feeling in your feet, those who have it may lose their balance and be at increased risk of falling. Dr. Parthasarathy suggests a simple solution.

“Those with diabetes can still be active,” Dr. Parthasarathy notes. “When you have neuropathy, a good way to start re-training your gait is with a treadmill—it's on even ground and has the safety bars should you feel like you're losing balance.”



THE ONLY CURE FOR NERVE DAMAGE IS PREVENTION. BUT YOUR PODIATRIST CAN HELP PROTECT YOUR FEET AND EVEN EASE SYMPTOMS IF YOU DO DEVELOP DIABETIC NERVE DAMAGE.



SYMPTOMS OF DIABETIC NERVE DAMAGE	
	
BURNING	TINGLING
	
NUMBNESS	HEAVINESS OR TIREDNESS



INCREASE THE RISK OF	
	
ULCERS Numbness may prevent you from feeling injuries or sores. Left untreated, a minor injury can become a major infection or chronic wound, increasing your risk for amputation.	FALLS Nerve damage can disrupt balance, affect gait, and even lead to falls.

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TOWARD PREVENTION		
		
INCREASING EXERCISE	MONITORING BLOOD SUGAR	IMPROVING DIET



SEE TODAY'S PODIATRIST FOR	
	
REGULAR FOOT EXAMS See your podiatrist immediately if you notice changes in your feet, including changes in sensation.	A TREATMENT PLAN Your plan can address the symptoms of nerve damage and help keep you on your feet.

To find a podiatrist near you or review more diabetes resources, visit www.apma.org/diabetes.