

# Peripheral Neuropathy in the feet

## Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01392 402093 or at [rduh.pals-eastern@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.pals-eastern@nhs.net) (for Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter services) or on 01271 314090 or at [rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net) (for North Devon services).

## What is neuropathy?

Neuropathy is the loss of feeling in your feet. The nerves become damaged and prevent signals being sent between the central nervous system and the peripheral nervous system.

## What causes neuropathy?

There are many different reasons why your feet may become neuropathic. The most common are listed below:

- Diabetes – high blood sugar levels can lead to nerve damage
- Alcoholic neuropathy – drinking too much alcohol can cause nerve damage
- Hereditary diseases – e.g. Charcot-Marie-Tooth, Friedreich's ataxia
- Chronic kidney disease – if your kidneys do not function correctly, this can lead to an imbalance in chemicals in the bloodstream, which can cause peripheral neuropathy
- Chemotherapy – some cancer treatments can cause peripheral neuropathy
- Infections – some infections, such as viral infections, can damage the nerves
- Vitamin B12 deficiency – can cause damage to the nerves
- Injury or trauma – direct trauma to the nerves or damage to the spine can cause peripheral neuropathy
- Autoimmune diseases – e.g. rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, Sjögrens syndrome and Guillain-Barré syndrome can all cause peripheral neuropathy in some cases
- For some people there is no specific cause for the nerve damage. This is called idiopathic peripheral neuropathy

## What are the symptoms?

The symptoms can vary depending on which nerves are affected. Peripheral neuropathy usually affects the feet but can also affect the hands and legs. Symptoms include:

- tingling and numbness
- burning or shooting pains
- loss of feeling in feet – you may not feel it if you stand on a sharp object or burn your feet
- muscle weakness
- foot deformity
- callus on the feet from the pressure caused by ill-fitting shoes. You may not be aware that the shoes are rubbing.

## How could neuropathy affect me?

- You may be unaware of an injury to your foot e.g. foreign body, blister, burns or scalds
- Infection risk – you may develop a wound on your feet and not be aware of it. This increases your chance of an infection.
- Falls risk – you may have loss of feeling in your feet, meaning you are not aware of where your feet are on the ground when you walk, which could lead to a loss of balance

## Why is this important for my feet?

If the nerves in your feet do not work correctly, you may not be aware of damage to your feet. If you are unaware of problems developing, you may develop a wound. It is important to monitor your feet daily.

## How do I look after my feet with peripheral neuropathy?

- It is important to check your feet every day for any open areas, swelling, changes in colour, or discharge. If you are unable to reach your feet, place a mirror on the floor to check your feet, or ask a relative or carer.
- Never walk barefoot as this leaves your feet unprotected
- Check the insides and soles of shoes and slippers for anything that may damage the feet
- Check the temperature of a bath or shower with your elbow first to prevent scalding the feet
- Never use a hot water bottle or electric blanket directly on the feet
- Turn socks inside out to prevent seams from rubbing

- Moisturise your feet daily

## Driving

If you have a condition which may affect your driving, please visit the DVLA website or contact them directly.

Drivers' Medical Enquiries  
DVLA  
Swansea  
SA99 1TU

Tel: 0300 790 6806

Website: [www.gov.uk/peripheral-neuropathy-and-driving](http://www.gov.uk/peripheral-neuropathy-and-driving)

## What do I do if I have a problem with my feet?

If you have a wound on your foot, cover it with a dry sterile dressing and contact the podiatry department or visit your GP.

## Help available

If your neuropathy is very painful, it may be possible for your GP to prescribe medication. Your GP will be able to discuss your individual case and suitability for treatment.

## Further information

### Local podiatry contact details

#### North:

Email: [rduh.podiatry@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.podiatry@nhs.net)

Tel: 01271 341509

#### East:

Email: [rduh.podiatryappointments-eastern@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.podiatryappointments-eastern@nhs.net)

Tel: 03452 667772

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## PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern, please contact:

PALS Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter

- call 01392 402093 or email [rduh.pals-eastern@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.pals-eastern@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital in Wonford, Exeter.

## PALS North Devon

- call 01271 314090 or email [rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at the North Devon District Hospital in Barnstaple.

## Have your say

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Tell us about your experience of our services. Share your feedback on the Care Opinion website [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk).

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