

Foot Neuropathy (Changes to feeling in the feet)

Information sheet

What is neuropathy?

We need to be able to feel pain in our feet as this gives us a warning that something isn't right with them. If we can't feel pain we can easily damage our feet without realising it. This can happen when people have neuropathy.

Neuropathy can also cause the foot to change shape by:

- The arch becoming higher
- Toes becoming clawed (bent downwards).
- The bones under the ball of your foot becoming more prominent (they can stick out more)

This can mean that the function of your foot will change and you need to make sure that your shoes fit well to accommodate all these new lumps and bumps. Over these areas hard skin can form and could be at risk of ulceration. If you have no feeling in your feet and can't feel pain you may not notice this.

Your Podiatrist will be able to advise you on the best footwear for your foot type and if required, treat any areas of hard skin or ulceration. They may need to provide you with insoles or specially made footwear to reduce pressure and protect your feet.

What are the signs of neuropathy?

- Loss of sensation; hot/cold, sharp/blunt
- Numbness in feet and legs, patchy or total
- Dry, cracked skin
- Pins and needles sensation
- Burning, stabbing, shooting, aching pains
- Hypersensitivity to touch – very sensitive
- Unsteadiness whilst walking

What can cause neuropathy?

Neuropathy is caused by damage of the blood supply to the nerves.

The main causes are:

- High blood sugar (diabetes)
- Low vitamin B12
- Alcoholism or drug abuse
- Nerve damage through trauma or surgery
- Neurological conditions

It is very important to keep all of these controlled. The Department of Health suggests the following:

Your **average blood sugar (Hba1c)** should be **7.5%** or less. This test is carried out by the hospital or your diabetic specialist nurse.

A **balanced diet** and **exercise** will help achieve all of these. Your doctor may also prescribe medication to help. If you are unsure about any of the above then seek advice from your doctor.

Smoking can impair your blood supply and damage the nerves.

For help, support and advice to stop smoking free phone: 08005875833

What should I look out for?

If your nerves have been damaged, and you have no sensation, it is important that you inspect your feet daily. Check the colour, temperature and if there are any breaks in the skin. If you can't see your feet ask someone to help you with this.

How is neuropathy tested for?

Your Podiatrist can carry out simple tests on your feet. They will use a 10g monofilament - a small plastic probe to test the nerve fibres. This is a simple test and does not hurt.

SOS Advice

If you notice a problem with your feet, **don't** ignore it; seek advice straight away. The signs that should cause concern and may be an indication of infection are:

- Any new ulcers or blistered areas on your feet
- Your foot becoming noticeably hotter than normal
- Any colour change; red or blue or bruising
- Any new areas of swelling on your feet
- Any discharge coming through the dressing where previously it was dry
- Any new pain or throbbing sensation
- Your foot developing an unpleasant odour
- Feeling feverish or unwell may also indicate the presence of infection.



Contact us

Oxleas Adults' Community Greenwich Podiatry Service

0208 320 3550

Monday – Friday

8:30am – 4:30pm

It is not always possible for us to answer the phone straight away.

Please leave a message and your call will be returned.

Please let us know if you require an interpreter or have any additional needs.