

Neuropathy: lack of feeling

Podiatry patient information and advice leaflet

Neuropathy is damage to the nerves which send messages to and from the brain, muscles, blood vessels and other organs. Causes include: diabetes, back problems, multiple sclerosis, alcohol and drug dependency.

Sensory neuropathy

The nerves that carry messages from the skin, bone and muscle to the brain are affected causing loss of feeling and sensations such as pain and variations in temperature. This mainly involves the nerves of the feet and legs but it can involve the hands and arms. As a result, foot problems can occur without knowledge. Such damage can lead to infection which can spread. **Symptoms include:** tingling, numbness, extreme sensitivity to touch and pain (painful neuropathy). Painful neuropathy may be treated with prescribed tablets or creams to help improve the situation.

Motor neuropathy

The nerves which send messages to muscles are affected. **Symptoms:** muscle weakness

especially in legs and alteration in the shape of the foot. The arch can heighten, the ball of the foot may become more prominent and toes can become clawed. If you have difficulty finding shoes to fit, you may require 'made to measure' shoes via a referral from your doctor.

Autonomic neuropathy

The nerves controlling involuntary actions including reflexes and sweating are affected. **Symptoms:** in the feet, dry skin due to nerve damage in the sweat glands.

Neuropathy means that the feet do not sense when something is wrong. Therefore it is vital that feet and shoes are checked daily. Avoid walking barefoot and ensure good foot hygiene.

The health professional performing your annual review will check for signs of neuropathy using a 10g monofilament to test for light touch on different areas of your foot. Other tests may include: distinguishing between different temperatures, between sharp and blunt neurotip and vibration tuning fork.

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