

The pain can be treated in a number of different ways - simple painkillers, creams and even some tablets what are usually used for treating depression as they have a calming effect on the nerves. They also have the added advantage of improving the quality of sleep.



Good control of your diabetes does reduce the progression of the nerve damage, so good diabetes control is the key to reducing the risk of neuropathy.



The most important thing to remember, is to protect the feet from injury, which can occur in people who are unaware that they have lost some feeling in their feet. This is why the **annual medical check-up** is so important - it allows your diabetes team to spot any problems that you may be unaware of. And remember: seek help as soon as possible if any problems occur.

If you are concerned, you can always contact:

Integrated Footcare Team
01392 402204

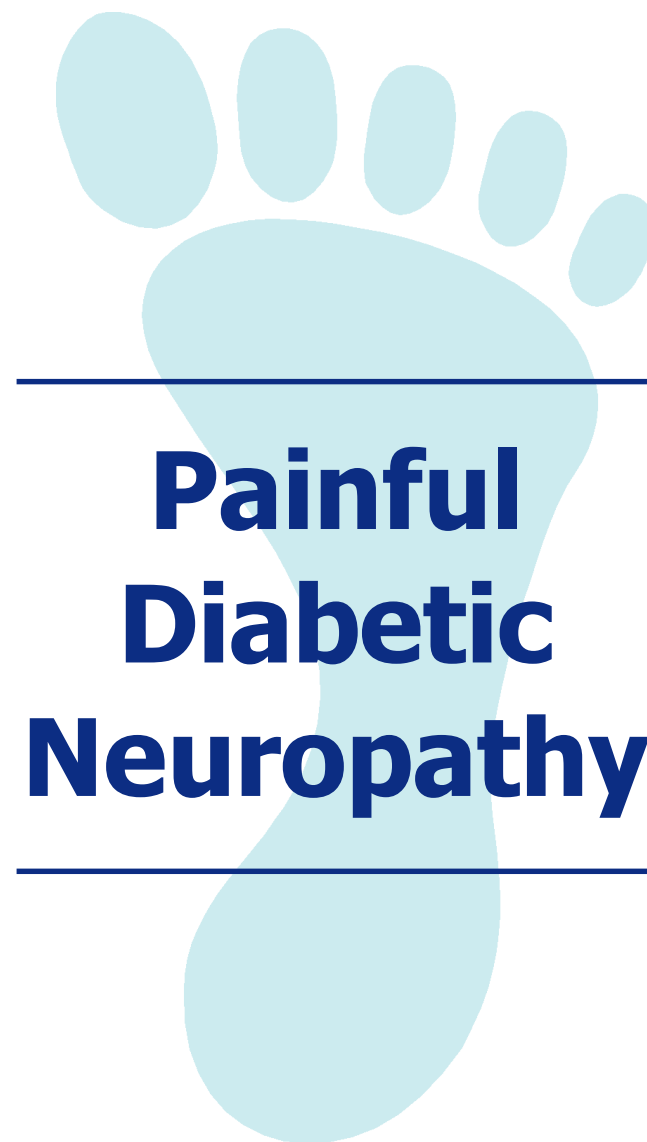
or **Diabetes Health Centre**
01392 402281

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Exeter Diabetes Centre

Registered Charity No: 1061384

August 2004

Integrated Diabetic Footcare Project




Painful Diabetic Neuropathy


Patient Information

Diabetes can cause nerve damage, called neuropathy, which can lead to altered sensation in your feet. There are different types of neuropathy depending on which type of nerve has been affected.

Symptoms

 **Tingling** - one of the most common symptoms, often described as pins and needles. This can affect the toes and feet and sometimes the lower leg as well.


 **Numbness** - the loss of feeling in the feet.

 **Pain** - some people have severe pain from neuropathy. This is usually felt in both feet - sometimes extending up both legs or one or both thighs. People often feel a burning sensation, pins and needles and shooting pains. Contact with the skin is very uncomfortable, so that the lightest touch, even from bedclothes, can be unpleasant.

The painful symptoms will ease, although this can take 6 to 18

months. In the meantime, there are many treatments for pain.

 Better diabetes control should eventually help the pain.

 Recovery is usually complete with the symptoms eventually disappearing.

Sensory Neuropathy

Sensory nerves carry messages of touch, temperature, pain and other sensations from the skin, bones and muscles to the brain. The main danger of sensory neuropathy is loss of feeling in the feet, especially if you are unaware that this has happened.

This is because you may not notice minor injuries which may be caused by:


 nails or stones in shoes;

 friction from badly fitting shoes;

 burns from radiators or hot water bottles;

 walking around barefoot.

If ignored, minor injuries may get worse and cause infections or ulcers.


 People with diabetes are more likely to be admitted to hospital with a foot ulcer than with any other complication of diabetes.


What causes sensory neuropathy?

It is still not known exactly how diabetes damages the nerves. However, it is understood that nerve damage is a consequence of reduced blood supply to the small blood vessels which prevents essential nutrients reaching the nerves.

It is also recognised that a high blood sugar can lead to disordered nerve function.

Treatment

 Although neuropathy may not be cured, there are now many treatments available. Symptoms can be relieved and your quality of life greatly improved. Treating pain resulting from diabetic neuropathy takes patience and persistence.

 Preventing pain is much easier than waiting until the pain has returned and then treating it.