

Health Education Leaflet Diabetic Foot Clinic

Neuropathy

(Loss of sensation to the feet)

You have been found to have 'Neuropathy' in your feet due to diabetes. This means that the nerves in your feet have become damaged, which reduces the body's response to pain and temperature. This may happen gradually so that you do not notice it. Although a lack of discomfort may seem advantageous it really is a serious problem. Lack of pain sensation allows small cuts and sores to go unnoticed until even more serious problems develop.

Some people may experience unpleasant symptoms with their neuropathy such as:

- Tingling or a feeling of "pins and needles."
- Numbness.
- A peculiar feeling of walking on cotton wool or pebbles.
- A feeling like wearing tight stockings.
- Stabbing or burning pain.
- Pain with the light touch of bed sheets.

Keeping your blood sugars as well controlled as possible can help slow the development of neuropathy

Loss of protective pain sensation

The most serious consequence of neuropathy in your feet is the loss of protective pain sensation. Without the pain alarm system, you receive no warning of pressure, injury or foot strain. Small injuries may go unnoticed until they become deep or infected. Serious burns can occur without pain.

The absence of pain often leads the affected person to neglect problems that need treatment. As a result, small problems are allowed to develop into serious conditions.

How will this affect your feet?

Neuropathy can affect the nerve fibres that control muscle strength and joint stability in the feet. The structure of the foot may change, bones may become more prominent and the toes may become clawed. This means you may find it difficult to find shoes that fit properly, and callous may form on new pressure points. These need professional care from your podiatrist.

Neuropathy can alter your ability to sweat. This means the skin on your feet may become dry and susceptible to cracks, which could become infected.

The way in which you walk may change or become unstable as a result of neuropathy. You may have difficulty in feeling the exact position of your feet when walking; this may affect

your balance. Changes in the way you walk may lead to new pressure points, which can cause blisters or callouses.

Even minor impairment of sensation can increase the risk that small problems will grow into large problems. If you don't make a habit of carefully inspecting your feet and protecting them when necessary, problems can easily go unnoticed.

How can I look after my feet?

- Inspect your feet every day for redness, cuts or injuries.
- Follow a daily foot care programme (see our leaflet).
- Ensure a doctor, nurse or podiatrist checks your feet at least once a year.
- Report any injuries to your feet (no matter how small) to your doctor, nurse or podiatrist if they fail to improve within three days or before if they start to deteriorate.
- NEVER walk bare footed, especially on holiday.
- Maintain good control of your diabetes.
- Quit smoking.

Without the warning of pain, you need to use your eyes and good judgement to tell you when your feet need special attention. This is the reason behind the daily foot inspection and for the advice on how to protect your feet.

If you have any concerns or questions about the advice provided in this leaflet, are experiencing any problems with your foot or are now unable to continue to redress it, please contact the **Diabetic Foot Clinic on (01603) 288522, Monday - Friday 9am-5pm.**

It is often easier to contact us via **email** on ebdcfootclinic@nuh.nhs.uk. If you are able, please email a photograph of your foot as this will help the team decide whether we need to see you urgently.

Please include your name, date of birth, address and hospital or NHS number in any email you send so we can correctly identify you. Please also include a telephone number we can contact you on if we need to speak to you urgently.

We aim to provide the best care for every patient. So, we would like your feedback on the quality of the care you have received from the Hospital. Please visit: <http://ratenhs.uk/IQu9vx>

