

## Diabetic neuropathy of the legs

Diabetic neuropathy is a type of nerve damage that can occur if you have diabetes. High blood sugar (glucose) can injure nerve fibers throughout your body, but diabetic neuropathy most often damages nerves in your legs and feet.

Depending on the affected nerves, symptoms of diabetic neuropathy can range from pain and numbness in your extremities to problems with your digestive system, urinary tract, blood vessels and heart. Diabetic neuropathy is a common serious complication of diabetes. Yet you can often prevent diabetic neuropathy or slow its progress with tight blood sugar control and a healthy lifestyle.

### Symptoms

There are four main types of diabetic neuropathy: peripheral neuropathy, autonomic neuropathy, radiculoplexus neuropathy and mono neuropathy. You may have just one type or symptoms of several types. Most develop gradually, and you may not notice problems until considerable damage has occurred.

The signs and symptoms of diabetic neuropathy vary, depending on the type of neuropathy and which nerves are affected.

### Peripheral neuropathy

Peripheral neuropathy is the most common form of diabetic neuropathy. Your feet and legs are often affected first, followed by your hands and arms. Signs and symptoms of peripheral neuropathy are often worse at night, and may include:

- Numbness or reduced ability to feel pain or temperature changes
- A tingling or burning sensation
- Sharp pains or cramps
- Increased sensitivity to touch — for some people, even the weight of a bed sheet can be agonizing
- Muscle weakness
- Loss of reflexes, especially in the ankle
- Loss of balance and coordination
- Serious foot problems, such as ulcers, infections, deformities, and bone and joint pain

### **Radiculoplexus neuropathy (diabetic amyotrophy)**

Radiculoplexus neuropathy affects nerves in the thighs, hips, buttocks or legs. Also called diabetic amyotrophy, femoral neuropathy or proximal neuropathy, this condition is more common in people with type 2 diabetes and older adults.

This condition is often marked by:

- Sudden, severe pain in your hip and thigh or buttock
- Eventual weak and atrophied thigh muscles
- Difficulty rising from a sitting position
- Abdominal swelling, if the abdomen is affected
- Weight loss

### **Mononeuropathy**

Mononeuropathy involves damage to a specific nerve. The nerve may be in the face, torso or leg. Mononeuropathy, also called focal neuropathy, often comes on suddenly. It's most common in older adults.

Signs and symptoms depend on which nerve is involved and may include:

- Difficulty focusing your eyes, double vision or aching behind one eye
- Paralysis on one side of your face (Bell's palsy)
- Pain in your shin or foot
- Pain in your lower back or pelvis
- Pain in the front of your thigh
- Pain in your chest or abdomen

Sometimes mononeuropathy occurs when a nerve is compressed. Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common type of compression neuropathy in people with diabetes.

Signs and symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome include:

- Numbness or tingling in your fingers or hand, especially in your thumb, index finger, middle finger and ring finger
- A sense of weakness in your hand and a tendency to drop things

### **When to see a doctor**

- A cut or sore on your foot that doesn't seem to be healing, is infected or is getting worse
- Burning, tingling, weakness or pain in your hands or feet that interferes with your daily routine or your sleep
- Dizziness
- Changes in your digestion, urination or sexual function