

Fact Sheet

Diabetic Neuropathy Pain

About

Diabetic neuropathies are a family of nerve disorders caused by diabetes. People with diabetes can, over time, develop nerve damage throughout the body. Some people with nerve damage have no symptoms. Others may have symptoms such as pain, tingling, or numbness—loss of feeling—in the hands, arms, feet, and legs. Nerve problems can occur in every organ system, including the digestive tract, heart, and sex organs.¹

“About 60-70% of people with diabetes have some form of neuropathy.”

About 60-70% of people with diabetes have some form of neuropathy. People with diabetes can develop nerve problems at any time, but risk rises with age and longer duration of diabetes. The highest rates of neuropathy are among people who have had diabetes for at least 25 years. Diabetic neuropathies also appear to be more common

in people who have problems controlling their blood glucose, also called blood sugar, as well as those with high levels of blood fat and blood pressure and those who are overweight.¹

In people with diabetes, blood sugar levels are too high. Over time, this can damage the covering on nerves or the blood vessels that bring oxygen to nerves. Damaged nerves may stop sending messages, or may send messages slowly or at the wrong times.²

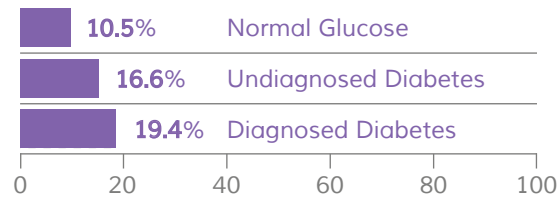
This damage is called diabetic neuropathy. Symptoms may include:²

- Numbness in your hands, legs or feet
- Shooting pains, burning or tingling
- Nausea, vomiting, constipation or diarrhea
- Problems with sexual function
- Urinary problems
- Dizziness when you change positions quickly

Symptoms depend on the type of neuropathy and which nerves are affected. Some people with nerve damage have no symptoms at all. For others, the first symptom is often numbness, tingling, or pain in the feet.¹ Painful diabetic neuropathy may interfere with general activity, mood, mobility, work, social relations, sleep, leisure activities, and enjoyment of life.³

Facts

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 25.8 million people, or 8.3% of the population are affected by diabetes (18.8 million diagnosed, 7.0 million undiagnosed). About 215,000 people younger than 20 years had diabetes (type 1 or type 2) in 2010.⁴



One study found that the prevalence of peripheral neuropathy was lowest among persons with normal glucose (10.5%) and highest among those with undiagnosed (16.6%) and diagnosed diabetes (19.4%).⁶

The most common type of diabetic neuropathy is peripheral neuropathy, also called distal symmetric neuropathy, which affects the arms and legs.¹

Patients with neuropathic pain experience a significant relationship between increasing neuropathic pain severity and a reduction in health utility measures.⁵

Additional Resources

American Diabetes Association

1701 North Beauregard Street
Alexandria, VA 22311
Phone: (800) 342-2383
E-mail: webmaster@diabetes.org
www.diabetes.org

National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse

1 Information Way
Bethesda, MD 20892-3560
Phone: (800) 860-8747
Fax: (703) 738-4929
E-mail: ndic@info.niddk.nih.gov
<http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30333
Phone: (800) CDC-INFO; (800) 232-4636
TTY: (888) 232-6348
E-mail: cdcinfo@cdc.gov
www.cdc.gov

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

P.O. Box 5801
Bethesda, MD 20824
Phone: (800) 352-9424
Phone: (301) 496-5751
www.ninds.nih.gov

The Neuropathy Association

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Resources verified July 2011.

References

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