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**Nerve damage to your feet (Peripheral Neuropathy)**

**What is peripheral neuropathy?**

* Often shortened to neuropathy, this is nerve damage to the feet, legs and hands, this damage may be caused by a number of different conditions.
* There are many symptoms but they can include, numbness, tingling, burning and pins and needles.
* Some people may develop severe pain due to neuropathy, however some people have no symptoms at all.

**Why could this be a problem for me?**

* With neuropathy, you may not notice if you have any injuries or damage on your feet.
* Neuropathy means you will have more chance of foot problems like ulceration, infection which can cause complications.

**How will I know if I have neuropathy?**

* You may not be aware of any numbness yourself, which is why it is important to check your feet.
* If the cause of the neuropathy is not known, you may be referred for other tests to assess possible causes and tell you how well your nerves are working.
* Dependant on the cause of the neuropathy, you may be monitored by a health professional on a regular basis.

**How do I avoid problems?**

**DO** -

* Check your feet every day for any colour changes from normal.
* Look for breaks or cracks in the skin, blisters or discharge, or swelling.
* If you can’t bend down to examine your feet, use a shatterproof mirror to see, or ask a family member or friend to check your feet.
* Check your shoes do not contain any other foreign objects inside of the shoe, e.g. bits of grit, a loose insole, or anything else which could cause issues.
* Also check the sole of the shoe to ensure nothing has penetrated the sole, for example nails or drawing pins.
* Ensure your shoes are a good fit. The best way to ensure a good fit is to get your feet measured at a shoe shop. When buying new shoes, go during the afternoon as your feet swell during the day.
* After you have bought new shoes, check your feet regularly to ensure they are not rubbing and wear them in gradually.

 **DON’T -**

* Don’t use any corn plasters or callous cures that contain acid as these will damage healthy skin.
* Don’t remove hard skin or corns with razors, corn knives or anything sharp.
* Don’t walk barefoot, even on carpeted floors.
* Don’t walk on sand barefoot.
* Don’t warm feet directly on hot water bottles, fires, radiators or hair dryers.
* Don’t put your feet into a bath or shower without testing the temperature with your elbow.

**If you have any concerns, please speak to your health professional, for example, your podiatrist, GP, nurse.**

**Can I improve neuropathy?**

Usually neuropathy cannot be cured but you can do a lot of things to prevent it getting worse:

* If you are diabetic, it is essential you maintain good blood glucose control. Neuropathy is more common in patients with poorly controlled diabetes.
* Maintain a healthy diet, reduce alcohol intake, regular exercise and stopping smoking can help.
* Follow your prescribed treatment.
* Get advice from your doctor, nurse, podiatrist, specialist or other healthcare professional.
* Monitoring your foot health will reduce the likelihood of complications due to your neuropathy.
* Your GP or hospital specialist can provide medication that reduces the symptoms associated with neuropathy.

**If you have numb or neuropathic feet, it is important that corns, blisters, callouses and ulcers are treated by a qualified health professional.**

**If you are concerned about your feet in any way, seek help from your medical professional.**