

Get relief from *peripheral neuropathy*

Nearly one in two people with diabetes will develop peripheral neuropathy, a nerve disorder marked by numbness, tingling or burning pain in the toes and feet. If you're among them, you may know that there is no cure. But take heart: Along with following your diabetes management plan, you can also try these strategies to ease symptoms and help restore freedom of movement.

Design a feet-friendly exercise routine. Light walking, yoga and other low-impact aerobic activities can improve blood flow to nerves and reduce inflammation, which, in turn, can decrease pain, improve sensation and help retain nerve function. In fact, a study in *Journal of Diabetes and its Complications* found that participants with peripheral neuropathy who followed a 10-week exercise program experienced improvements in pain and neuropathic symptoms.

Head to the pool. Not just for summertime, water aerobics may help

relieve nerve pain. The activity reduces stress on the lower limbs and feet while exercise pumps blood and oxygen to tissues that may have nerve damage. In a study in *Clinical Rehabilitation*, water aerobics that included stability and strength exercises improved neuropathic pain, as well as balance and gait. To protect feet from injuries, wear aquatic footwear.

Relax with warm water. Taking a bath or soaking in a hot tub may do more than soothe away stress; hydrotherapy using warm water can boost circulation and reduce pain in people with nerve damage, according to a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Be sure the water is warm, not hot, and don't soak for longer than 20 minutes.

Apply gentle pressure. Both acupuncture and acupressure can help with neuropathic pain, according to several studies in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*. Researchers



believe the use of light pressure from hands or tiny needles on certain pressure points stimulates nerves and muscles, helping the body better respond to pain and improving blood circulation. Get your doctor's okay first, and work with a licensed acupuncturist who has experience with diabetic neuropathy.

Rub in heat. Over-the-counter pain creams and ointments that work as a local anesthetic may temporarily relieve nerve pain. A review in *Journal of Pain Research* found that .075% topical capsaicin (made from chili peppers) helped improve neuropathic pain, including in those with diabetic neuropathy. Start by applying the cream three to four times a day to painful areas.

Practice mindfulness. Research shows that a mind-body approach, like meditation, can help people better decrease pain sensitivity. Several imaging studies show that over time mindfulness can change brain patterns associated with pain so that people don't experience it at the same intensity. There are many types of mindfulness techniques; ask your healthcare provider which ones may be best for you.

Dab on oils. Though research is still ongoing, some studies suggest essential oils like peppermint, chamomile and lavender may help relieve neuropathy symptoms due to their anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving properties. Get your doctor's okay first and be sure to dilute with a plant-based oil, such as coconut oil, to prevent skin irritation. 🛁