

# Your nervous system and diabetes:

## blood sugar control for damage control

### Am I at risk of neuropathy?

Because poor blood sugar control is a main cause of neuropathy, people with diabetes are at greater risk. So getting better control of your blood sugar is very important.

Your body is hard at work 24 hours a day. It relies on your nervous system to keep everything working smoothly. Your nervous system is made up of all the nerves that run throughout your body. Nerves are like telephone wires that deliver messages to and from your brain to all your muscles and organs.

#### Here's what nerves can do:

- Send messages about pain, heat or cold, and touch to your brain
- Tell your muscles how and when to move
- Control body actions you cannot control by yourself, such as how you digest food and go to the bathroom

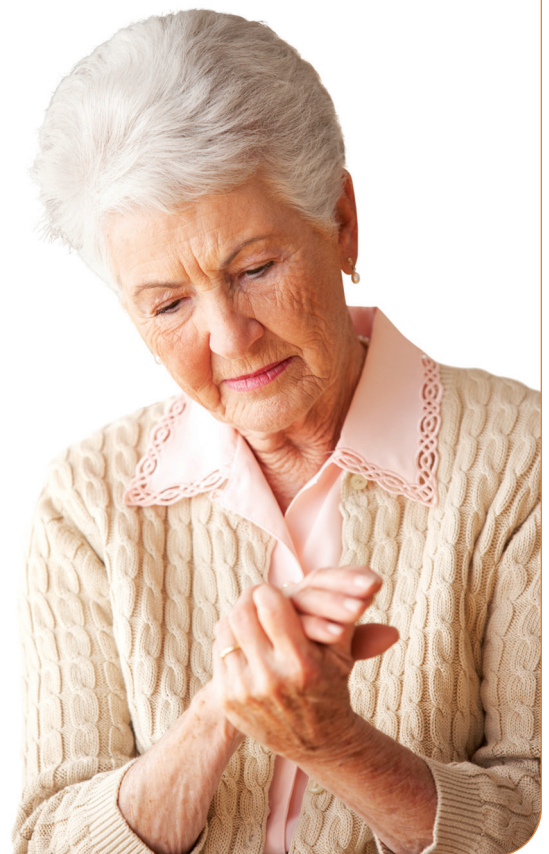
If you have uncontrolled diabetes, this can cause damage to your nerves. And if your nerves are damaged, they cannot tell your brain that something is wrong. Nerve damage is also known as neuropathy (pronounced *new-ROP-uh-thee*). Neuropathy can harm your whole body. So watch out for the signs, and take special care to avoid it.

#### Why should I care about neuropathy?

If you have diabetes, you should take every step to make sure you avoid neuropathy. It can lead to serious health problems, such as:

- Tingling, pain, or numbness in your feet, legs, hands, and arms
- Infection
  - Body parts can become numb from neuropathy. For example, you could get a blister or a sore on your foot and not even know it. That blister or sore could become infected. If that infection is not treated, it could go through your skin and into your bone. To stop the infection from spreading to the rest of your body, your foot may need to be amputated. (Amputation is when a body part is surgically removed.)
- Damage to your heart, sex organs, and digestive tract

**So, as you can see, neuropathy is very serious!**



## What are the signs of neuropathy?

You can notice neuropathy in many ways. It can cause tingling, pain, or numbness in your feet and hands. Taking care of your feet is especially important. Why? Neuropathy can start in your feet and work its way up.

Neuropathy can also cause problems in other parts of your body. You might have neuropathy if you:

- Often feel like you have a full stomach or are vomiting a lot
- Have trouble going to the bathroom
- Feel dizzy or weak
- Are sweating more or less than usual

## How can I protect myself against neuropathy?

There are many things you can do to lower your chance of getting neuropathy. And if you already have it, you can stop neuropathy from getting worse.

Follow these steps to keep your body working smoothly:

### Keep your blood sugar in control

- Check your blood sugar regularly.
- Have your healthcare provider test your A1C at least twice a year.
- Take your prescribed medicines.
- Eat healthy and stay active.

### Live healthier

- Control your blood pressure.
- If you are overweight, lower your weight with diet and exercise.
- Stop smoking.
- Limit your alcohol use.

### Talk to your healthcare provider

- Discuss any numbness, tingling, or pain with your healthcare provider. Also discuss any problems with digestion, urination, or sex.

If you already suffer from neuropathy, these steps can help reduce your symptoms and delay any more damage to your body.

## Take care of your feet

*Check your feet often for changes in look or feel. Report anything unusual to your healthcare provider right away.*

*Have your feet checked every time you visit your healthcare provider, even if they seem healthy.*

*Keep your feet clean, smooth, and dry. Keep toenails trimmed.*

*Protect your feet by wearing comfortable, properly fitted socks and shoes at all times.*

*Treat foot infections quickly.*

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