Health Basics

Diabetic Neuropathy (Nerve Pain)

What is diabetic neuropathy?

Diabetic neuropathy is damage to the nerves that develops slowly after a person has diabetes for several years.

What are the symptoms of diabetic neuropathy?

The most common type of diabetic neuropathy causes a loss of sensation in the feet and legs. Symptoms include tingling in the feet and lower legs, numbness and pain. There may also be weakness in the muscles, which causes difficulty walking.

Other types of neuropathies related to diabetes can affect specific parts of the body, such as diabetic amyotrophy. This type of neuropathy affects the thigh muscles and causes weakness and wasting away of the muscles. Diabetic neuropathy can also affect the cranial nerves, causing double vision, drooping of the eyes or dizziness.

What causes diabetic neuropathy?

Uncontrolled blood sugar is the most common cause of neuropathy. Individuals whose blood sugar levels remain high over a long period of time frequently experience damage to the sensory nerves.

What are the complications of diabetic neuropathy?

Initially, a burning sensation in the feet, due to high blood sugar levels, could signal the beginning of diabetic neuropathy. Eventually, this burning sensation is replaced by numbness, which can lead to even bigger problems. Some of these difficulties include the forming of calluses and blisters that can lead to ulcers on the feet. In addition, because sensation is reduced in this area, bone and joint problems can develop.

How is diabetic neuropathy treated?

The main treatment for diabetic neuropathy aims to prevent more tissue damage. This is achieved by routinely controlling blood sugar levels. In addition, it’s key that individuals with diabetes take care of their feet. This means ensuring that shoes fit properly and regularly checking the feet for any infections or cuts.

Doctors may also prescribe painkillers and low-dose anticonvulsant medications to relieve the pain, burning and tingling of neuropathy.

Finally, some people also get relief from pain by taking regular walks, warm baths, and using elastic stockings.

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