

# Advice & Information

## Neuropathy / Poor Sensation

South West Yorkshire Partnership   
NHS Foundation Trust

### Podiatry Department



With all of us in mind

# NEUROPATHY (POOR SENSATION)

## What is neuropathy?

Sensory neuropathy means reduced or lack of touch sensation, it is usually shortened to 'neuropathy'.

Neuropathy, especially in the extremities such as the feet, can occur with a number of illnesses such as diabetes, pernicious anaemia and certain cancers. Neuropathy can also occur as a result of a trapped or damaged nerve.

## How can it be tested?

A healthcare professional such as a podiatrist can assess whether the feet have neuropathy by testing perception to vibration and light touch. Further tests can be carried out if needed.

## What problems are associated with neuropathy?

Neuropathy can lead to a diminished awareness of changes in

- temperature
- touch
- pain

Loss of feeling and reduced pain awareness in your feet makes you more prone to injury, as a result foot problems may occur without you being aware of it. Such damage may lead to infection, which can spread un-noticed, due to lack of pain feelings, which is potentially serious, and you must seek professional medical advice immediately.

Some of the symptoms experienced with neuropathy include:

- Loss of sensation
- Tingling
- Pins and needles (parasthesia)
- Shooting pains
- Burning sensations

## **FOOTWEAR ADVICE**

Do not walk barefoot. Wear well fitting footwear at all times to protect your feet from possible damage or injury. (See our 'Footwear' Advice and information leaflet).

Before putting on shoes, check inside for small stones or grit. Check that there are no ridges in the shoes that may press and cause an injury. Ensure there are no prominent seams on socks or stockings, it may help to wear them inside out.

Break in new shoes gradually. Wear them in the house to start with for half an hour at a time, then check your feet for any areas of redness, blistering, or swelling.

## **CARING FOR YOUR FEET**

It is essential to check your feet daily for any cuts or abrasions as walking on an injured foot could cause further damage and/or complications.

Wash your feet daily in warm water (40°C, 104°F) but do not soak them. Test the water temperature with your elbow to ensure it is not too hot, as your feet might not detect this. Make sure you dry them well, especially between your toes.

If your skin is dry, daily use of a good quality moisturising cream will help, but do not use between the toes.

If you have sweaty feet with moist skin between toes, wipe surgical spirits between them daily to reduce the problem. The regular dusting of a talcum powder can also help this.

If you are able to care for your own feet it is safer to file your nails weekly. This will reduce their length without leaving any sharp edges which might damage other toes. If you feel you must cut your toenails, cut little and often, using clippers rather than scissors. (See our 'Nail Cutting' Advice and information leaflet).

Damage to the nerves in your feet, from neuropathy, can alter the shape of your feet. You may develop a high arch, which will cause the ball of your foot to become prominent and the toes to claw. If you have difficulty finding shoes that fit, you may need specially made shoes. See your doctor or get advice from your Podiatrist, as these shoes are often only made on prescription.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

If you choose to use a private Podiatry practitioner then ensure they are Health Professions Council Registered (HPC Registered).

See your local telephone directory for names and numbers.

If you require further information, contact our office.

**Podiatry Department,  
New Street Health Centre,  
Upper New Street,  
Barnsley S70 1LP**

Telephone: **01226 644809**

References / Further reading



The Society of  
Chiropodists and Podiatrists

<http://www.feetforlife.org/footcare>



**Patient UK**  
The same health information as provided  
by GPs to patients during consultations

<http://www.patient.co.uk>

**Chair: Joyce Catterick OBE**  
**Chief Executive: Steven Michael**



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