

Neuropathic Pain: Care Instructions



Overview

Neuropathic pain is caused by pressure on or damage to your nerves. It's often simply called nerve pain. Some people feel this type of pain all the time. For others, it comes and goes.

Diabetes, shingles, or an injury can cause nerve pain. Many people say the pain feels sharp, burning, or stabbing. But some people feel it as a dull ache. In some cases, it makes your skin very sensitive. So touch, pressure, and other sensations that did not hurt before may now cause pain.

It's important to know that this kind of pain is real and can affect your quality of life. It's also important to know that treatment can help. Treatment includes pain medicines, exercise, and physical therapy.

Medicines can help reduce the number of pain signals that travel over the nerves. This can make the painful areas less sensitive. It can also help you sleep better and improve your mood. But medicines are only one part of successful treatment.

Most people do best with more than one kind of treatment. Your doctor may recommend that you try cognitive behavioral therapy and stress management.

If you feel that your treatment is not working, talk to your doctor. And be sure to tell your doctor if you think you might be depressed or anxious. These are common problems that can also be treated.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Save hard tasks for days when you have less pain. Follow a hard task with an easy task. And remember to take breaks.
- Relax, and reduce stress. You may want to try deep breathing or meditation. These can help.

- Keep moving. Gentle, daily exercise can help reduce pain. Your doctor or physical therapist can tell you what type of exercise is best for you. This may include walking, swimming, and stationary biking. It may also include stretches and range-of-motion exercises.
- Try heat, cold packs, and massage.
- Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
 - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
 - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- Get enough sleep. Constant pain can make you more tired. If the pain makes it hard to sleep, talk with your doctor.
- Think positively. Your thoughts can affect your pain. Do fun things to distract yourself from the pain. See a movie, read a book, listen to music, or spend time with a friend.
- Keep a pain diary for a while. Try to write down how strong your pain is and what it feels like. Also try to notice and write down how your moods, thoughts, sleep, activities, and medicine affect your pain. These notes can help you and your doctor find the best ways to treat your pain.

When should you call for help?



Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You feel sad, anxious, or hopeless for more than a few days. This could mean you are depressed. Depression is common in people who have a lot of pain. But it can be treated.
- You have trouble with bowel movements, such as:
 - No bowel movement in 3 days.
 - Blood in the anal area, in your stool, or on the toilet paper.
 - Diarrhea for more than 24 hours.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your pain is getting worse.
- You can't sleep because of pain.
- You are very worried or anxious about your pain.
- You have trouble taking your pain medicine.
- You have any concerns about your pain medicine or its side effects.
- You have vomiting or cramps for more than 2 hours.

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