6 Strategies for Coping With Diabetes Foot Pain

by REBECCA PACIOREK

What Does Diabetes Foot Pain Feel Like?

Like you, I have type 2 diabetes. Of all the craziness that goes along with that, the fear factor of foot-related issues is what causes me the most stress.

I have a weird kind of neuropathy going on. I don't have loss of feeling — I have *extreme* sensitivity instead. Socks make me crazy, I hate wearing shoes, and don't get me started on trying to sleep!

I put a community question up on our Facebook page and many of you offered advice. I tried several things suggested and am going to share those experiences here. But first, what causes the foot pain and neuropathy in the first place?

Causes of Neuropathy in Diabetics

Diabetes peripheral neuropathy (DPN) is caused by uncontrolled high blood sugar levels sustained over a long period of time. These high sugars cause breakdowns in the walls of the small blood vessels supplying the nerves with oxygen and nutrients.

High sugars can also prevent the nerves from transmitting signals to our brain. Neuropathy can also be caused by other factors such as alcohol abuse, smoking, high cholesterol, mechanical injuries (like carpal tunnel) and plain old genetics.

In addition, the medicine Metformin may also lower your Vitamin B-12. A deficiency in B-12 can lead to neuropathy so be sure to check with your doctor to be sure that you have enough Vitamin B-12 in your system.

There are several types of neuropathy. With peripheral neuropathy, you'll experience the tingling, numbness, burning or shooting pains and can cause you to lose the ability to feel pain or changes in temperature. Typically, this type is in your feet and sometimes hands.

Tips for Alleviating the Pain and Sensitivity

Now that we know what causes the neuropathy, what can we do to ease the pain?

Keep Sugars Low

The main thing in keeping neuropathy symptoms at bay, and preventing it in the first place, is to keep your blood sugars in check. Remember, neuropathy happens when your sugars are elevated over a long period of time.

Staying on top of your sugar levels throughout the day and knowing your A1C number will help you to be able to better manage your diabetes and keep your diabetic symptoms under control. Many people who already have

neuropathy symptoms will tell you that the symptoms are much less annoying when their sugars are lower.

Exercise

Because your circulation system is what is affected by having peripheral neuropathy, keeping the blood flowing will go a long way to keeping your feet happy. The American Diabetes Association suggests exercising a minimum of three to five times per week.

In between official exercise times, particularly if you have a desk job, you need to be sure your feet are moving as much as possible. Every hour, take a moment to do circles with your feet. Or, get up and march in place for a few minutes. Anything to get that circulation going.

Use a Diabetic Foot Pain Relief Cream and Lotion

You, the *NewLifeOutlook* community, suggested several lotions and creams that seem to be helping keep the pain and burning under control. Gold Bond diabetic foot lotion was mentioned most often and other similar lotions like Magnilife and Neoteric were also suggested.

A quick search on Amazon proves that while these are easily available, there are a lot of options so be sure to read through some reviews and consider asking your doctor for their suggestions. I personally tried the Gold Bond diabetic lotion and found it to be helpful, though short lasting.

Try Diabetic Foot Pain Home Remedies

We at *NewLifeOutllook* are frequently asked about “natural” pain relief methods. Various people suggested Epsom salt soaks, vinegar soaks and alternating hot/cold water soaks.

My research also shows that clove oil appears to be helpful for many people. In addition, cayenne pepper is a rich source of capsaicin, which has long been known as a good pain reliever. You will find capsaicin in various lotions. You may also consider adding a teaspoon of cayenne powder to a bucket of water and try soaking your feet.

Wear Proper Diabetic Footwear

Making sure that you have proper fitting footwear that doesn’t rub, bind or scratch your feet is also important. This applies to diabetic socks as well. Keeping your feet physically in good shape will go a long way to keeping foot problems at bay.

Use Medications for Diabetes Foot Pain

If you’ve tried all the more natural methods above and they still aren’t enough, there are several medications that are known to work for neuropathy. There are potential side effects of each and not every drug will work for every person so you and your doctor will have to have some frank discussions and some trial and error may be in order to find the right medication.

The main medications used are as follows:

- **Anti-seizure medicines:** gabapentin (Gralise, Neurontin) and pregabalin (Lyrica).
- **Anti-depressants:** imipramine (Tofranil) and duloxetine (Cymbalta). I asked my doctor to switch my low dose anxiety medicine, Lexapro, for duloxetine to see if it would help. It’s been a week and I do already have enough relief to get to sleep easier at night.

If you’re like me and the whole foot care thing stresses you out, know that you are not alone. Also, know that there are many easy things you can do to lessen any problems from arising in the first place. Hopefully, some of the above tips help.