On Your Feet

Ten steps to ease neuropathy pain

January 1, 1999 By Mark Mascolini

While doctors, researchers and PWAs continue testing and debating a wide range of treatments for painful neuropathy (see “Pins and Needles”), this condition’s miseries strike ever more people, especially in the feet and hands. Here are some, ahem, steps you can take that may give some relief:

1. Maintain your weight, **eat well** and take your multivitamins. Studies link reduced body weight and malnutrition to worsening neuropathy.

2. Wear **shoes** that fit well. Your doctor can recommend a foot specialist to see if special shoe inserts will help.

3. Throw away the tight **socks**. Loose cotton socks make the going easier.

4. A little **walking** can help, even if your feet object. (Getting blood to the feet may relieve some pain.) But don’t stand still longer than you have to.

5. Easy-to-do stretching and strengthening **exercises** can limber up tight muscles. (See booklet listed below, or ask a physical therapist for advice.)

6. Douse your feet in **cool water** or even ice water: Sit on the edge of a bath tub, submerge your feet in a pan of room-temperature water, then slowly run colder water into the pan.

7. Keep **bedclothes** raised above your feet. A homemade semicircular hoop—or even a pillow next to your feet—can form a tent to keep sheets off sensitive toes.

8. Use body parts with intact sensation to test **water temperature**.

9. Massage those throbbing tootsies. Brisk **rubdowns** improve circulation. One study found that professional plus home massage helped with neuropathy unresponsive to drugs.

10. How about **biofeedback**? It won’t end the pain, but it may help you cope with the mild or moderate variety.

Some of these tips are adapted from Project Inform's Peripheral Neuropathy Quick Sheet (800.822.7422 or www.projinf.org/hh/sneuro.html) and from Exercising with Neuropathy, *a booklet by the Neuropathy Association (800.247.6968 or www.neuropathy.org).*

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