

Diabetic Neuropathy Script

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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April is Defeat Diabetes month with a goal of educating everyone about preventing diabetes or its complications. One of every three people in the United States either has diabetes or is at risk for developing the disease, with children increasingly at risk.

Diabetes can harm your nerves. Known as neuropathy, it can be painful.

“The most common neuropathies are numbness and tingling in the feet and toes which gradually works its way up to the ankles and legs and even to the hands,” says Dr. Christopher Zallek, neurologist with the OSF HealthCare Illinois Neurological Institute.

Left untreated, neuropathy can affect a person’s quality of life.

SOT DR. CHRIS ZALLEK

(Numbness and tingling can eventually become painful, you can even have weakness in the most severe cases. This can affect balance and getting around, the discomfort is very distracting and it’s a painful thing that affects quality of life. :18)

For insulin dependent Type I diabetics, the best way to decrease your chances of developing neuropathy is to control your sugars. Type 2 diabetes behaves differently. Dr. Zallek says it is important to keep your weight under control along with your cholesterol and blood pressure, watch what you eat, and make sure you get at least 30 to 60 minutes of activity a day. He adds that doesn’t have to be all at once or a high intensity workout.

If you are experiencing symptoms, it’s important to see your doctor and get screened. Up to 30% of the cases with unexplained numbness and tingling will be identified as pre-diabetes.

SOT DR. CHRIS ZALLEK

(There’s a screening that can be done by the primary care physician that can address these factors early and can prevent neuropathy from happening or progressing. If you address the risk factors early, there are also some who feel you can allow for some healing. :24)

While there are no medications to stop or reverse neuropathy, there are medications available to lessen the tingling and temperature hypersensitivity.

Dr. Zallek also stresses the importance of foot care. Feet should be kept clean with nails trimmed regularly, by a professional if necessary. Check for callouses on the bottom of feet, using a mirror placed on the floor or by having a family member check if there are flexibility issues; do not walk barefooted; and always use balance precautions since a lack of feeling in your feet can affect your balance.