

# Family Foot & Ankle Care, P.C.

**Dr. Alan J. Discont & Associates**

**Physicians & Surgeons of the Foot & Ankle**

## PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY

Peripheral neuropathy is a condition in which the small nerves in the feet are not working correctly. It is most commonly associated with diabetes, but can be related to one of many other disorders as well. It may be hereditary in some families. At times, a cause may never be found, which is referred to as "idiopathic" peripheral neuropathy.

Peripheral neuropathy manifests itself as burning pain, tingling, or numbness in the feet, and is more prevalent at night. It usually starts in the toes and gradually progresses up the foot. Early in the process, one foot may be affected; however, both feet usually are involved. Patients may report sensation of "sandpaper" or "cardboard" beneath their feet. The skin may become discolored. In severe cases, the muscles in the feet can become weak, resulting in "clawing" or "hammering" of the toes.

Diagnosis of peripheral neuropathy is based on a typical history of the symptoms described above. IN the doctor's office, feeling can be tested using monofilaments. These are small pieces of nylon in differing sizes, which give your physician an idea of how well the sensory nerves are functioning. Your physician may order a special test called an EMG/NCV, which actually measures the electrical activity in your nerves.

Treatment of peripheral neuropathy is based on the underlying cause, if one is found. Your physician may prescribe a medication to reduce the burning pain in your feet.

As your Podiatrist, we are concerned with protecting your feet, because your normal protective mechanisms (your nerves) are not functioning correctly. It is important to visually inspect the tops and bottoms of your feet twice daily for redness, swelling, blisters, sores, or cuts. Look inside your shoes for foreign objects, and shake your shoes out before putting them on. Keep your feet clean and dry by wearing absorbent socks. Wear shoes with a soft sole that are deep and wide enough to accommodate your foot comfortably. Avoid cutting your toenails too short. If anything abnormal appears, notify your physician as soon as possible, since prevention is the best medicine.

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