

A Step Ahead Foot & Ankle

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Peripheral Neuropathy or Numbness and Burning

Peripheral neuropathy is a term used to describe disorders of the nerves in your face, arms, legs, and torso. The symptoms often begin gradually and start in the toes and spread upward. The pain and numbness may be most problematic at night when trying to sleep. To some the pain is unbearable yet to others the problems are barely noticeable. Damaged nerves don't communicate properly, causing symptoms such as, i.e. pain, burning, numbness, sensitivity to touch, weakness, sharp tingling or jabbing electric-like sensations and lack of coordination. Peripheral neuropathy has many causes, diabetes, autoimmune diseases, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, vitamin deficiencies, alcoholism, toxic drugs, radiation exposures, genetic tendencies, and thyroid deficiencies. Many times the cause is undetermined. Sensory neurons are located outside the spinal cord in clusters called ganglia. Sensory nerves have two ends, one connected to tissue in the lower extremity, and the other end is connected to the ganglia in the low back near the spinal cord. Sensations are generated by touch and then sent to the spinal cord then to the brain. Neuropathy damages pain fibers and trick the brain into perceiving pain even though none is present. These symptoms are usually most noticeable at rest or at night when trying to sleep. If neuropathy causes pain that is diminishing the quality of life, then it should be treated. Medications have been reported to help with the pain but do not diminish the numbness. Numbness can result in sores which lead to infection and limb

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