

Your nervous system and diabetes



Here's what nerves do:

- Send messages about pain, heat, cold, and touch to your brain
- Tell your muscles how and when to move
- Control body actions on their own, without any effort on your part (such as digesting food)

How will I know if I have nerve damage?

Nerve damage can cause tingling, pain, or numbness in your feet and hands. Taking care of your feet is very important, because nerve damage can start in your feet and work its way up.

Nerve damage can also cause problems in other parts of your body. You might have nerve damage if you

- Often feel like you have a full stomach or are throwing up a lot
- Have trouble going to the bathroom
- Feel dizzy or weak
- Are sweating more or less than usual

Diabetes is the leading cause of nerve damage. Controlling your blood sugar can help prevent or delay nerve damage and related problems.

How can I protect myself against nerve damage?

There are many things you can do to lower your chance of getting nerve damage. And if you already have it, you can stop it from getting worse.

Follow these steps to keep your body working smoothly:

- Talk to your health care provider
 - Discuss any numbness, tingling, or pain and any problems with digestion, going to the bathroom, or your sex life
- Keep your blood sugar in control
 - Check your blood sugar regularly
 - Have your health care provider test your A1C at least twice a year
 - Take your prescribed medicines
 - Eat healthy and stay active
 - Control your blood pressure and cholesterol
- Live healthier
 - If you are overweight, lose weight with diet and exercise
 - Stop smoking
 - Limit your alcohol use

Why should I care about nerve damage?

If you have diabetes, you should take every step to avoid nerve damage. Nerve damage is also called neuropathy (new-ROP-uh-thee) and can lead to serious health problems, such as

- Tingling, pain, or numbness in your feet, legs, hands, and arms
- Damage to your heart, sex organs, and digestive tract
- Infection that leads to amputation
 - Uncontrolled diabetes can cause damage to your nerves. If your nerves are damaged, they cannot tell your brain that something is wrong.

- Body parts can become numb from nerve damage. For example, you could get a blister or a sore on your foot and not even know it. That blister or sore could become infected. If it is not treated, the infection could go through your skin and into your bone. To stop it from spreading to the rest of your body, your leg may need to be amputated (removed by a surgeon).

Talk to your health care provider about any numbness, tingling, or pain you may have.

