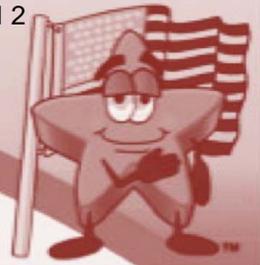


# Physical Therapy News

From all of us at First Choice Physical Therapy



## Diabetic Nerve Problems

**D**iabetic neuropathy is not an uncommon problem with diabetics. Diabetes, especially type 2, affects a large number of people. Statistics have shown that between 90-95% of diabetics are diagnosed with Type 2. This occurs when your body either ignores insulin or your pancreas won't create enough. Because of the harshness of diabetes on the body and its entire system, there are a multitude of issues and problems that can happen to a diabetic. Sadly, most Type 2 diabetics could have avoided a lifetime of physical problems if they simply had taken note when their physicians told them that they were on a path towards diabetes and that it was time to change their eating habits. A proper diet can usually deter most Type 2 Diabetes from ever occurring.

### An Explanation of Diabetic Neuropathy

Diabetic neuropathy is a special type of nerve damage that occurs particularly in diabetics. What happens is that the nerves are damaged badly enough that it becomes hard to carry messages to the brain and other areas of the body. It can be very painful and hard to live with. Some common symptoms of diabetic neuropathy are muscle weakness and difficulty with walking. Many times the diabetic will experience sores, cuts, and blisters on their feet that aren't painful due to the nerves' inability to transport the feeling of pain from the foot to the brain. This is one of the main reasons why your physician will always require you as a diabetic to remove your shoes and socks for a complete physical examination each time you come in.

Other symptoms of diabetic neuropathy include tingling and numbness in various parts of your body, especially in your extremities such as your fingers, toes, hands and feet. Bladder problems,

like frequent urinary tract infections or incontinence, are also common symptoms of neuropathy. There are many times that digestive problems can be a factor too. Bloating, constipation, diarrhea, abdominal pain and vomiting are all attributes of digestive problems that can occur. Men can suffer from erectile dysfunction and women from vaginal dryness due to diabetic neuropathy.

It's obvious that the symptoms alone can be enough to make life a nightmare. Add on to these problems are the everyday issues of life with diabetes. It may make individuals who haven't quite reached that threshold of Type 2 Diabetes to take heed of what their physician is telling them because life is really hard with this type of disease.



### So what is the cause of diabetic neuropathy?

When your sugar levels are higher than normal, it damages the nerves and blood vessels overtime. This is one of the reasons why it is very important you keep your blood sugar levels under control. People who are unable to control their blood sugar levels are at high risk of getting diabetic neuropathy. People with cholesterol problems such as high cholesterol and those who smoke also put themselves at high risk, and men are more likely to have diabetic neuropathy than women.

So can you avoid getting diabetic neuropathy? There is no simple answer. What you can do is to take care of your diabetes. The most important thing is to keep your blood sugar levels under control. A healthy diet and weight loss are two of the biggest ways to reduce your chances of reaching the stage of diabetic neuropathy. Exercise is also an important factor in keeping your sugar levels at bay. You need to take any medication, insulin or other prescriptions that your doctor prescribes as directed and make sure you do not miss your medical dosage. What it comes down to is keeping yourself as healthy as possible; follow your doctor's directions and keeping your sugar levels consistent are ways to avoid diabetic neuropathy.



**B**orn and raised in the Mitten State, Dr.

Alessi grew up with a passion for physical fitness. While at Oakland University, he received his Bachelor of Science degree, and participated in intercollegiate cross country. His love for running continued after college, and Dr. Alessi began receiving sponsorships, and participating in triathlons. After all of the foot and ankle injuries he saw, Podiatry seemed like a 'no brainer' for him. He enrolled at the Ohio College of Podiatric Medicine and graduated in 1987. He completed his residency in Podiatric Medicine and Surgery from Michigan Osteopathic Medical Center the following year. During this time, he also completed a rotating residency in Podiatric Medicine from Botsford General Hospital.

Fast forward 23 years later: Dr. Alessi and his wife have the most successful Podiatry practice in Northern Michigan. He still remains humble, however and just wants to be known as, 'a foot doctor.' "Being able to help people and relieve their pain and suffering is just one of the best feelings!" As a healthcare provider in Northern Michigan, Dr. Alessi has grown to be quite diverse. He provides care to people of all ages, treating everything from sports medicine injuries, to diabetes wound care, and an array of other foot and ankle problems with both conservative options and surgical options. He serves all of Northern Michigan with three office locations.

Dr. Alessi has a simple philosophy, pick one or two things and do them well. This is exactly what he does. He is able to provide the best quality foot and ankle care in Northern Michigan, while still maintaining a great family life at home. His family keeps him occupied outside of the office, and he likes it that way. To learn more about Dr. Alessi, his services, and other practice locations, visit [petoskeyfoot.com](http://petoskeyfoot.com)!

If you're having foot or ankle problems, wait no longer! Call Dr. Alessi, and start feeling better today!

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## Physical Therapy Can Help

**N**o matter how you look at it, diabetic neuropathy is not a pretty thing. It can be painful, it can be deadly and it can't be cured. If you're already a diabetic, this is a wake-up call to listen to the professionals so you don't end up with any of these problems we've listed. Your first step is to take control of your life, change your lifestyle, get professional help and begin your walk on the healthy path of life. If you have been told you are "border line" diabetic or "guaranteed you'll be diabetic by a certain age" now is your time to change that. You CAN keep from becoming diabetic by altering your lifestyle NOW. You do not have to take this path of pain and agony. You can make the changes. Contact us now to learn more about how a professional workout regiment can help. Work with a dietician, physical therapist, physician and whomever else you need to get healthy and live a longer, happier life!

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# Know More About Diabetic Neuropathy

## **Diabetic Neuropathy – Treatments & Cures:** **Are they Available?**

Unfortunately, there is absolutely no “cure” for diabetic neuropathy. There are ways to help with the symptoms and make better choices that will enable you to maintain sugar levels that are in the “good numbers” consistently. Most treatments focus on simply slowing the development of the neuropathy by controlling blood sugar, changing the patient’s lifestyle and setting him or her on a path to a healthy diet and exercise.



Since there is no cure, the only thing we can hope for is that people with diabetes takes the disease seriously and helps themselves as opposed to waiting for others to give them a magic pill. As a diabetic, you must try to eat a healthy diet, maintain a healthy weight, control your blood sugar, exercise regularly, avoid smoking and limit your alcohol. Again, these things will simply help prolong the time it takes for neuropathy damage to occur and hopefully delay any other damage to your organs and body that

diabetes is doing to you.

Keeping you comfortable is the only other method of “treatment” available for those who have diabetic neuropathy. There are several medications available to help ease your pain. Your physician will work with you to determine which medications will work best.

### **Different types of diabetic neuropathy**

There are basically four types of diabetic neuropathy: focal, peripheral, proximal, and autonomic neuropathy.

**Focal neuropathy** can appear suddenly, taking many by surprise. It affects specific nerves in the head, torso and leg. It can cause aching behind the eye(s), double vision and inability to focus the eye, along with “Bell’s Palsy,” or paralysis on one side of the person’s face. It can also cause severe pain in the lower back or pelvis, chest, stomach or side of the torso, and therefore can often mimic a heart attack, appendicitis or heart disease. There can also be pain in the front of the thigh, shin area and sometimes inside of the foot. Focal neuropathy can be extremely painful and very unpredictable. It generally occurs in older diabetics and tends to improve by itself over a matter of weeks or months. As painful as it is, and as many things that can go wrong with focal neuropathy, it doesn’t seem to cause any long-term damage in the end.

**Peripheral neuropathy** is also known as sensorimotor neuropathy, or distal symmetric neuropathy. It is nerve damage generally in your limbs, arms, legs, hands and feet. Most often it affects the feet and legs before it affects your arms and hands. It’s not unusual for many diabetics to have signs of peripheral neuropathy that their physician notices but the diabetics feel no symptoms themselves. This is typical because the physician is trained to know exactly what to look for. The symptoms of peripheral neuropathy are: extreme sensitivity to touch, numbness, insensitivity to pain and temperature, cramping, sharp pains, tingling, burning, prickly sensations and loss of balance or coordination. Many times these symptoms can worsen at night.

Other symptoms include muscle weakness, loss of reflexes and problems at the ankle, which can lead to foot deformities due to the fact that a person’s walk may alter dramatically to compensate for the changes in their legs and feet. Blisters, sores, swelling can all occur. Again, this is why it is important to have your feet checked EVERY time you are with your physician and even your physical therapist if you are working with a therapist for some of your diabetes or neuropathy issues.



**Proximal neuropathy** is also referred to as femoral neuropathy, lumbosacral plexus neuropathy, or diabetic amyotrophy. Proximal neuropathy begins with pain that starts usually on one side of the body, often in the hips, buttocks, thighs, or legs. It is generally more common with Type 2 and older diabetics. Having proximal neuropathy can cause an inability to go from a sitting position to a standing position without help. It causes weakness in the legs and usually treatment for the pain and the weakness usually required. Depending upon the amount and type of nerve damage the time for recovery will vary.

**Autonomic neuropathy** affects many internal organs, including the heart, digestive organs, sexual organs, and more. It affects the nerves that regulate blood pressure, control the heart and monitor blood glucose levels and respiratory function. It can cause nerve damage that result in problems with digestion, urination, vision and sexual response. One of the worse parts of autonomic neuropathy is that it can distress the system that restores glucose levels back to normal after a hypoglycemic episode, which in return can cause the loss of any warning symptoms of hypoglycemia. It upsets the nerves in your stomach, bladder, eyes, sweat glands, lungs, heart and intestines. Autonomic neuropathy is truly one of the scariest neuropathies that a diabetic can have because the symptoms affect all the major organs of your body.



**We have 2 convenient locations!**

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\* 319 Lake St  
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231-536-2358