



## Patient Education Sheet

Oncology Nursing Society  
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# How Can I Manage Peripheral Neuropathy?

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Many patients with cancer experience peripheral neuropathy during or after chemotherapy treatments. Chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy is a result of nerve damage or nerve death caused by chemotherapy toxins accumulating in the nerves. The effects of these toxic changes typically start in the feet and hands. Peripheral neuropathy can produce a variety of symptoms that range from aggravating to painful.

Here are simple tips and techniques that you can discuss with your healthcare provider to relieve peripheral neuropathy.

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## May or May Not Be Helpful

- **Assistive devices:** Studies of assistive devices for patients with diabetes showed that using a cane, leg braces, leg splints, or similar devices can help improve your balance and body alignment. However, the use of assistive devices has not been studied in patients with cancer.

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## Not Enough Evidence

Although you may find that these techniques work for you, not enough studies have been done to show that they work to alleviate peripheral neuropathy.

- Acupuncture
- Capsaicin
- Physical activity or exercise
- Pulsed infrared light therapy
- Spinal cord stimulation
- Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation and high-frequency external muscle stimulation
- Drugs:
  - Acetyl-L-carnitine
  - Alpha-lipoic acid
  - Amifostine
  - Calcium and magnesium
  - Carbamazepine
  - Gabapentin
  - Glutamine
  - Glutathione
  - Lamotrigine
  - Nortriptyline
  - Recombinant human leukemia inhibitory factor
  - Vitamin E

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## Patient Safety Tips

The following safety tips are recommended by experts to help manage peripheral neuropathy.

- Monitor for signs and symptoms of peripheral neuropathy (e.g., numbness, tingling, weakness, pain) and report them to your healthcare provider as soon as you or your family notices them.
- Watch for hazards when you are walking. Remove obstacles from your home, such as throw rugs or clutter on the floor. Use skid-free shower and bathroom mats, and use a cane or walker if needed.
- Check your hands and feet for sores or blisters, and wear properly fitted shoes.
- Lower the temperature on your home water heater to avoid burns, and use a thermometer to make sure the water in your tub or shower is 120°F or less.
- To prevent problems with posture or constipation, dangle your legs over your bed before getting up in the morning, eat a high-fiber diet, and drink plenty of fluids.

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## Questions for Your Healthcare Provider

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*Always consult your healthcare provider before adding any new treatments or other interventions into your routine.*