



NEXT STEP

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From Connecticut Foot Care Centers, LLC



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November Is American Diabetes Month

Diabetic neuropathy is nerve damage caused by diabetes. When it affects the arms, hands, legs, and feet it is known as diabetic peripheral neuropathy. Diabetic peripheral neuropathy is different from peripheral arterial disease (poor circulation), which affects the blood vessels rather than the nerves.

Three groups of nerves can be affected by diabetic neuropathy:

- Sensory nerves, which enable people to feel pain, temperature, and other sensations
- Motor nerves, which control the muscles and give them their strength and tone
- Autonomic nerves, which allow the body to perform certain involuntary functions, such as sweating.

Diabetic peripheral neuropathy doesn't emerge overnight. Instead, it usually develops slowly and worsens over time. Some patients have this condition long before they are diagnosed with diabetes. Having diabetes for several years may increase the likelihood of having diabetic neuropathy.

The loss of sensation and other problems associated with nerve damage make a patient prone to developing skin ulcers (open sores) that can become infected and may not heal. This serious complication of diabetes can lead to loss of a foot, a leg, or even life.

The nerve damage that characterizes diabetic peripheral neuropathy is more common in patients with poorly managed diabetes. However, even diabetic patients who have excellent blood sugar (glucose) control can develop diabetic peripheral neuropathy. There are several theories as to why this occurs, including the possibilities that high blood glucose or constricted blood vessels produce damage to the nerves.

As diabetic peripheral neuropathy progresses, various nerves are affected. These damaged nerves can cause problems that encourage development of ulcers. For example:

- Deformities (such as bunions or hammertoes) resulting from motor neuropathy may cause shoes to rub against toes, creating a sore. The numbness caused by sensory neuropathy can make the patient unaware that this is happening.
- Because of numbness, a patient may not realize that he or she has stepped on a small object and cut the skin.
- Cracked skin caused by autonomic neuropathy, combined with sensory neuropathy's numbness and problems associated with motor neuropathy can lead to developing a sore.

Depending on the type(s) of nerves involved, one or more symptoms may be present in diabetic peripheral neuropathy.

For sensory neuropathy:

- Numbness or tingling in the foot
- Pain or discomfort in the feet or legs, including prickly, sharp pain, or burning feet

For motor neuropathy:

- Muscle weakness and loss of muscle tone in the feet and lower legs
- Loss of balance
- Changes in foot shape that can lead to areas of increased pressure

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For autonomic neuropathy:

- Dry feet
- Cracked skin

To diagnose diabetic peripheral neuropathy, the foot and ankle surgeon will obtain the patient's history of symptoms and will perform simple in-office tests on the feet and legs. This evaluation may include assessment of the patient's reflexes, ability to feel light touch, and ability to feel vibration. In some cases, additional neurologic tests may be ordered.

First and foremost, treatment of diabetic peripheral neuropathy centers on control of the patient's blood sugar level. In addition, various options are used to treat the painful symptoms.

Medications are available to help relieve specific symptoms, such as tingling or burning. Sometimes a combination of different medications is used.

In some cases, the patient may also undergo physical therapy to help reduce balance problems or other symptoms.

The patient plays a vital role in minimizing the risk of developing diabetic peripheral neuropathy and in preventing its possible consequences. Some important preventive measures include:

- Keep blood sugar levels under control.
- Wear well-fitting shoes to avoid getting sores.
- Inspect your feet everyday. If you notice any cuts, redness, blisters, or swelling, see your foot and ankle surgeon right away. This can prevent problems from becoming worse.
- Visit your foot and ankle surgeon on a regular basis for an examination to help prevent the foot complications of diabetes.
- Have periodic visits with your primary care physician or endocrinologist. The foot and ankle surgeon works together with these and other providers to prevent and treat complications from diabetes.

Shoes For Teen Athletes

By the time you reach your teenage years, many teens are getting to be serious about the sports they play. Wearing the right sport-specific shoe is key to your performance on the field and court. First, visit a podiatrist to have your feet measured to get the correct size. If you participate in a sport two or three times a week, you should definitely be wearing a sport-specific shoe. Avoid pain from sports and up your game by wearing the best shoe:

Basketball

Common Foot Injuries: Sprains, tendinitis, stress fractures.

The Perfect Basketball Shoe Should:

- Have a thick, stiff sole, that gives support while running and landing jumps.
- Have a high heel construction that supports the ankle during quick changes in direction.

Football and Lacrosse

Common Foot Injuries: Turf toe, Achilles tendinitis.

The Perfect Football Cleat Should:

- Have a good amount of high ankle support. This is especially important for linemen and other players who make frequent sideways movements during play.
- Allow for proper traction on a grassy field, in both wet and dry conditions. This will largely help to prevent injury.

Soccer

Common Foot Injuries: Ankle sprains, turf toe, ingrown toenails.

The Perfect Soccer Cleat Should:

- Not have more than a half inch of space between the big toe and the end of a shoe.
- Feature the stud type for the ground that will be played on most often: soft, hard, or firm.

Running

Common Foot Injuries: Plantar fasciitis, shin splints, Morton's neuroma.

The Perfect Running Shoe Should:

- Provide maximum shock absorption, to help runners avoid ailments.
- Match your foot's arch type (high, medium, low).



Heel Pain Stretch: Piriformis Stretch

Lie flat on your back with knees bent. Cross the right knee over the left thigh. Stabilize the left thigh with your arms. Gently pull the right knee toward your chest until a comfortable stretch is felt in the buttock/hip area. Reverse legs and repeat.

Hold 30 seconds. Repeat 5 times for each leg, 1 time per day.

How To Pick Out Baby's First Shoes

Seems like yesterday that you were getting your first ultrasound and dreaming about taking your new baby home. Now your little one is crawling all over the place and getting ready to take their first steps. How did it happen so quickly? You've seen all of the cute options for first shoes, but how do you know what's good and what's not? Here are some tips in picking out baby's first shoes:



- 1. Don't Rush!** Most new walkers don't need shoes right away when they first start to walk, unless it is outside. Barefoot is actually the best way for children to learn to walk. Children do not need shoes until they are actually walking.
- 2. Know Where To Go.** And that does not mean Walmart or Kmart unfortunately. It is also not the time to hone your skill of shopping online. Your baby's first pair of shoes should be fitted by a professional, along which each pair thereafter. When shoes do not properly fit, it affects your child's gait and foot development. Go to a shoe store that will have a fitter on hand.
- 3. Get A Shoe With Sole.** For walking shoes, babies need shoes with soles that are stiff because flexible ones don't offer any support. Do the bend test- if the shoe bends in half or twists, then try another pair. Don't worry about finding shoes with arch support as arches do not develop on children until they are three years old.
- 4. If The Shoe Fits, Wear It!** The salesperson should do a thorough check for the proper fit, all around the baby's foot. There should be room for the foot to move in the shoe, along with a quarter to half inch space between the front of the shoe and the big toe.
- 5. Check and Re-check Those Little Piggies.** Check your child's feet often after purchasing the shoes, especially after a growth spurt. Children are not typically good at expressing pain or what hurts where, so check your child's feet for redness and blisters. Imagine if you had a blister on your feet and couldn't tell anyone and had to wear those shoes every day?

8 Stretches For Bunions

Bunions occur when the tissue at the base of your big toe becomes swollen, forming a large bump on the side of your foot. Bunions can cause intense pain and may eventually lead to arthritis in the area. The good news is that most bunions can be managed without surgery.

Special exercises "will not get rid of the bunion because the bunion is a biomechanical deformity, but they can relieve symptoms and increase flexibility," says Ayman M. Latif, DPM, podiatrist at Connecticut Foot Care Centers.

Non-surgical approaches, such as physical therapy exercises, can help to slow the progression of your bunion. Starting out with conservative therapy is always the first line of attack, unless the bunion is severe. Foot exercises and toe stretches for bunions can help keep the joint between your big toe and the rest of your foot mobile, maintaining flexibility and strengthening the muscles that control your big toe.

Here are some stretches you may find helpful if you have a bunion:

***Toe Stretches.** Stretching out your toes can help keep them limber and offset foot pain. To stretch your toes, point your toes straight ahead for 5 seconds and then curl them under for 5 seconds. Repeat these stretches 10 times. This stretch is also beneficial if you have hammertoes.

Continued on Back

Diabetic Recipe:

Apple Cake With Lemon Thyme



Ingredients

- 1 tart apple (Granny smith) about 1 1/2 cups, cubed and peeled
- 4 Tbsp. fresh thyme leaves, finely chopped (use fresh lemon thyme if available)
- 1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup Splenda
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 3/4 tsp. baking soda
- 3/4 cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1/3 cup canola oil
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1 tsp. vanilla

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Lightly coat with nonstick spray and flour an 8 by 8 inch square pan. Combine the apples, thyme, and lemon juice and set aside.
2. Combine the flour, Splenda, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt in a separate bowl. In a large bowl combine the eggs, oil, orange juice, and vanilla.
3. Add the apple thyme mixture and mix well until blended. Add the dry ingredients, stirring until just combine. Spoon batter into prepared pan and bake for 30 minutes. Allow to cool and serve.



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***Toe Flexing and Contracting.** Dr. Latif also recommends pressing your toes against a hard surface such as a wall, to flex and stretch them; hold the position for 10 seconds and repeat 3 to 4 times. Then flex your toes in the opposite direction; hold the position for 10 seconds and repeat 3 to 4 times.

***Stretching Your Big Toe.** Using your fingers to gently pull your big toe into proper alignment can be helpful as well. Hold your toe in position for 10 seconds and repeat 3 to 4 times.

***Resistance Exercises.** Wrap either a towel or belt around your big toe and use it to pull your big toe towards you while simultaneously pushing forward, against the towel, with your big toe.

***Ball Roll.** To massage the bottom of your foot, sit down, place a golf ball on the floor under your foot, and roll it around under your foot for 2 minutes. This can help relieve foot strain and cramping.

***Towel Curls.** You can strengthen your toes by spreading out a small towel on the floor, curling your toes around it, and pulling it toward you. Repeat 5 times. Gripping objects with your toes like this can help keep your foot flexible.

***Picking Up Marbles.** Another gripping exercise you can perform to keep your foot flexible is picking up marbles with your toes. Do this by placing 20 marbles on the floor in front of you and use your foot to pick up the marbles one by one and place them in a bowl.

***Walking On the Beach.** Whenever possible, spend time walking on sand. This can give you a gentle massage and also help strengthen your toes. This is especially important for people with arthritis with the bunion.

Performing these exercises in both the morning and night will help patients with bunions the most. Do them at a time that is convenient for you, like when you are watching tv or sitting at your desk.



WACKY SHOE OF THE QUARTER

Halloween Shoes

Have a safe, happy, and foot-healthy fall season from all of us at CT Foot Care Centers. For more "Wacky Shoes", check out our Facebook page and Pinterest Shoe board.



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