

Peripheral Neuropathy

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)

Source

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). *Peripheral Neuropathy Information Page*.

Peripheral neuropathy refers to the many conditions that involve damage to the peripheral nervous system, which sends signals between the brain and spinal cord and all other parts of the body. Neuropathy means damage to one or more nerves, especially the peripheral nerves. More than 100 types of peripheral neuropathy have been identified, each with its own characteristic set of symptoms and prognosis. Impaired function and symptoms depend on the type of nerves that are damaged. Symptoms of neuropathy range from mild to disabling and may include a loss of reflexes, problems feeling pain or changes in temperature, numbness and tingling, and pain that is often worse at night. Symptoms may develop over days, weeks, or years. In some cases, the symptoms improve on their own and may not require advanced care. Causes of neuropathy include:

- diabetes
- physical injury (trauma)
- vascular and blood problems
- autoimmune disorders
- nutritional or vitamin imbalances, alcoholism, and exposure to toxins
- certain chemotherapy drugs
- infections

Most instances of neuropathy are either *acquired*, meaning the neuropathy isn't present from the beginning of life, or *genetic*. Acquired neuropathies are either symptomatic (the result of another disorder or condition) or idiopathic (meaning it has no known cause).