

Protecting Yourself from Peripheral Neuropathy

This pamphlet will help you understand your DPNCheck test and provide you with an overview of peripheral neuropathy.

What is the DPNCheck test?

It is a sophisticated diagnostic test of your nerves. It helps your doctor determine whether your nerves are healthy or if they are impaired, which is called peripheral neuropathy. If you do have peripheral neuropathy, the test will also help your doctor determine the severity.



Peripheral neuropathy may have no signs or symptoms until the nerves have been substantially damaged. Therefore, the DPNCheck test may be the only way to detect the problem at an early stage and initiate treatment that is critical to controlling its impact on your life.

Why were you given this test?

Your doctor determined that you are at risk for peripheral neuropathy.

What does a positive result mean?

A positive test means you probably have peripheral neuropathy.

What is peripheral neuropathy?

Peripheral nerves run from your spine to your arms, hands, legs and feet. There are two types of peripheral nerves; sensory and motor. Sensory nerves convey sensations such as your ability to feel, the temperature of objects you touch, and pain to your brain. Motor nerves carry signals from the brain to your muscles instructing them to contract or relax. For example, if you step on a sharp object, the sensory nerves in your feet send a signal to your brain

telling it you're on something sharp. Your brain then processes that information and sends signals through your motor nerves to the muscles in your foot which results in moving your foot off the sharp object. Peripheral neuropathy is a disorder where the peripheral nerves are damaged in some fashion. This damage disrupts their ability to transmit messages to and from the brain. This can result in a reduction in your ability to sense, it may also lead to pain and poor balance, and in severe cases to weakness.

Why do you have peripheral neuropathy?

Peripheral neuropathy affects over 30 million Americans. There are many causes, the most common being diabetes which is referred to as diabetic peripheral neuropathy. People who are pre-diabetic, overweight, have high blood pressure or have elevated cholesterol levels are at increased risk. Other common causes include chemotherapy, autoimmune conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, excessive alcohol use and low vitamin B12 levels. The risk of peripheral neuropathy goes up with age. Among people 65 or older, over one-quarter have peripheral neuropathy.

What are some common symptoms of peripheral neuropathy?

The symptoms of peripheral neuropathy are usually felt first in the feet, though some people may experience them in the hands if the disease is advanced. You may experience some of the following symptoms with your peripheral neuropathy:

- Pain or burning
- Numbness or tingling
- Sensation of pins and needles
- Increased sensitivity to normal touch
- Trouble feeling hot or cold
- Trouble feeling your feet when you walk





What health risks are associated with peripheral neuropathy?

There are several health risks associated with peripheral neuropathy including:

Pain:

You may experience pain which can be severe. It is often described as burning or stabbing pain.

Falls:

People with peripheral neuropathy, especially the elderly, are at a higher risk of falling that may result in serious injuries.

Foot Ulcers:

If you have diabetes and peripheral neuropathy, you are at increased risk of foot ulcers. Ulcers occur most often on the ball of the foot or on the bottom of the big toe. Remember, even though some ulcers do not hurt, every ulcer should be seen by your doctor right away.

Poor Sleep:

The pain associated with peripheral neuropathy may disrupt your normal sleep patterns. The lack of sleep can then increase your sensitivity to pain and generally harm your health.

Here is the good news – now that we have objectively confirmed that you have peripheral neuropathy, it can be addressed and its progression can be monitored.

Can peripheral neuropathy be cured?

There is no “cure” for peripheral neuropathy. However, there are several things that can be done that will slow down its progression and even partially reverse it. Depending on the reason for your peripheral neuropathy, your doctor will give you a plan of action that you should follow as closely as possible. Just by reading this pamphlet you are taking the important step of educating yourself about peripheral neuropathy.



You also need to manage the risks associated with peripheral neuropathy. The most important step you can take is talk to your doctor about your symptoms.

Manage Pain

- If you are experiencing pain, discuss your pain management options with your doctor.

Make Sure You Sleep Well

- If pain is interfering with your sleep, discuss this with your doctor.

Lower Your Risk for Falls

- Remove all items that may be a tripping hazard around your home.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Improve the lighting in your home and always use nightlights.

If You Have Diabetes, Practice Good Foot Care

- Check your feet for sores and other injuries every day.
- Have your feet examined each time you see your doctor.
- Wear shoes that fit right and do not rub or pinch your feet, or cause blisters.
- Never walk barefoot or while wearing just socks.
- Make sure you see a podiatrist on a regular basis.

To learn more, visit www.dpncheck.com