

Day 5: Those Darn Feet! :Peripheral Neuropathy

Peripheral Neuropathy

- Peripheral neuropathy, a result of nerve damage, often causes weakness, numbness and pain, usually in our hands and feet
- Can result from problems such as traumatic injuries, infections, metabolic problems and exposure to toxins. One of the most common causes is diabetes
- What does peripheral neuropathy have to do with falls though?
- The decreased sensation in the feet, which is caused by peripheral neuropathy, can lead to postural instability and poor walking mechanics
- The nerves in our feet tell us where we are and what our feet are doing
- When nerves in our feet don't work, it is as if our feet are "blind"
- Muscle weakness that is caused by neuropathy can also lead to a fall

Just remember that our feet are for life. You can't trade them in for new ones when they get worn out! It is important to take good care of your feet throughout your life

What you can do to reduce falls caused by peripheral neuropathy:

- Consider using ridged insoles in your shoes for increased sensation
- Ensure that you're treating the root cause of the neuropathy (e.g., ensure that your diabetes is under control)
- Talk to your doctor about medications that can help with peripheral neuropathy
- Wear shoes at all times to protect your feet from injury
- Check your feet every day and talk to your doctor if you have any concerns
- Socks for neuropathy/compression socks
- Avoid alcohol



Day 5: Those Darn Feet! Proper Footwear

- Where we step can influence our risk of falling. Our choice of footwear can also influence our risk of falling
- Our regular footwear should be:
 - Comfortable
 - Clean and non-slip sole
 - Closed-toe
 - No heel
 - Wide enough to not put pressure on toes
 - Velcro or elastic laces

Looking at your Feet

- Always watch where you're going to avoid running into something or tripping over something
- Although it is NOT encouraged to constantly look at your feet when you walk, it is important to have your feet within your view. For example, avoid carrying anything (e.g., a box) that blocks off the vision of your feet
- Not having a clear idea of where your feet are and what is in your way can lead to a fall

What can we do?

- Have a clear view of your feet, if you need to look down at them, but avoid walking and staring at your feet
- Invest in and wear proper footwear
- Wear shoes in the home
- Discard used and broken shoes and slippers
 - If you must wear slippers, ensure that they have a sturdy sole on them (e.g., moccasins)
- Ensure that your shoe laces are tied properly

