

Center for Peripheral Neuropathy


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[Learn About Peripheral Neuropathy](#)

[Home](#) | [About PN](#) | [Types of PN](#) | [Evaluation](#) | [Physician Finder](#) | [Treatment](#) | [About Us](#) | [Glossary](#) | [Sources](#)

Types of Peripheral Neuropathy - Idiopathic

[Idiopathic](#) | [Pre-diabetic/Diabetic](#) | [Hereditary](#) | [Toxic/Secondary to Drugs](#) | [Inflammatory](#) | [Systemic/Metabolic](#) |
[Compression](#) | [Other Types of PN](#)

Idiopathic Neuropathy

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Sometimes peripheral neuropathy seems to happen for no particular reason. Doctors call this disorder "idiopathic", which means "of unknown cause." Typically, idiopathic peripheral neuropathy occurs in people over 60 years old; progresses slowly (or doesn't progress at all after the initial onset); and it can be very disruptive to someone's normal life and lifestyle.

Help Find A Cure

Your donation will support research to identify causes and cures for peripheral neuropathy. [Click here to learn more.](#)

SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS

(Not all symptoms and signs may be present.)

You may feel these symptoms first in your feet and then possibly in your shins:

- Numbness, tingling and pain
- Unsteady when standing, walking
- Muscle weakness (including weak ankles) or cramps

You may also experience these symptoms:

- Feelings of faintness when standing

EVALUATION AND TESTS

(Not all evaluation and tests may be necessary.)

- Physical examination
- [Neurological evaluation](#)
- [Electromyography](#)
- [Nerve conduction velocity test](#)
- Standardized tests to measure:
 - Muscle strength
 - Loss of function of sensory and autonomic nerves
- [Blood and urine tests](#) to identify potentially treatable causes for neuropathy (e.g., vitamin B12 and folate levels; thyroid, liver and kidney functions; vasculitis evaluation); antibodies to nerve components (e.g., anti-MAG antibody); antibodies related to celiac disease; Lyme disease; HIV/AIDS; hepatitis C and B).

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TREATMENT AND THERAPY

(Not all treatments and therapies may be indicated.)

- [Over-the-counter pain medication](#) for mild pain
- For severe pain, take over-the-counter pain medication or prescription drugs used for peripheral neuropathy, on a regular basis—rather than waiting until nighttime when symptoms can become more severe
- Taking safety measures to compensate for loss of sensation
- Special therapeutic shoes (which may be covered by Medicare and other insurance)

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