Information for Older Adults

FAST FACTS: Neuropathic Pain

Neuropathic pain is a result of damage in the nervous system. This can be a disturbance in the function of one or more nerves and is often associated with damage to major organs. The pain is often described as burning, numbness, tingling, electric shock-like, and possibly deep aching.

✓ **Diabetic Neuropathy**
  - Injury to nerve fibers from high blood sugar, most often in hands and feet
  - Signs/Symptoms: numbness and tingling
  - Management: control blood sugar

✓ **Post-herpetic Neuralgia**
  - Complication of shingles and is a burning pain that lasts long after the rash and blisters disappear
  - Signs/Symptoms: burning at shingles site, sensitivity to touch, muscle weakness
  - Treatment: prescription medications

✓ **Multiple Sclerosis**
  - Autoimmune disease of unknown case; destroys the protective sheath on nerves.
  - Signs/Symptoms: painful muscle spasms, numbness, weakness of limb on one side, unsteady walking, blurriness, loss of vision, tingling/electric-shock sensations.
  - Treatment: prescription and over the counter medications, massage, muscle relaxants for muscle spasms.

✓ **Spinal Cord Injuries / Muscular Weakness Affecting Only One Side of Body**
  - Causes: trauma, arthritis, cancer, inflammation/infection, degeneration, strokes.
  - Signs/Symptoms: loss of sensation/movement or bowel/bladder control, pain, exaggerated reflex.
  - Treatment: medications; non-drug treatments may include TENS units and massage.

✓ **Peripheral Neuropathy**
  - Definition: damage to nerves outside brain or central nervous system.
  - Causes: trauma and infections; toxins such as alcohol or poisons; diseases such as lupus, Guillain-Barre, Lyme; vitamin B deficiency; hypothyroid or kidney disease.
  - Signs/Symptoms: numbness & tingling in hands, feet, and many other sites.
  - Treatment: medications; non-drug treatments may include TENS units and massage.
✓ **What Else You Should Do**
  - Write down and share information about your pain with your healthcare provider.
  - Use a [Pain Diary](#) to note important information useful to the healthcare provider.
  - Try a non-drug treatment and document the impact on your pain in your Pain Diary.

**References**
