

FAST FACTS: Neuropathic Pain

Neuropathic pain arises from actual or threatened damage to tissues due to the activation or damage in the nervous system. This can be a disturbance in the function of one or more nerves and is often associated with end organ damage. 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 sugars, most often in hands and feet
- Signs/Symptoms (S/S): numbness and tingling
- Management: control blood sugar

✓ **Post herpetic Neuralgia (Complication of Shingles)**

- Complication of Shingles that last longer than a few weeks, increased risk with age
- S/S: burning at shingles site, sensitivity to touch, muscle weakness
- Treatment: Lidocaine patches, Tricyclic anti-depressants, Anticonvulsants, Opioids, Capsaicin

✓ **Multiple Sclerosis**

- Autoimmune disease destroys protective sheath on nerves, cause unknown
- Woman between 20-40 higher risk
- S/S: painful muscle spasms, numbness, weakness of limb on one side, unsteady gait, blurriness, loss of vision, tingling/electric-shock sensations
- Treatment: same as other conditions for pain, muscle relaxants for muscle spasms

✓ **Spinal Cord Injuries, Hemiparesis**

- Causes: trauma, arthritis, cancer, inflammation/infection, degeneration, strokes
- S/S: loss sensation/movement or bowel/bladder control, pain, exaggerated reflex
- Treatment: same as post herpetic neuralgia; TENS units, massage

✓ **Peripheral Neuropathy**

- Causes: trauma & infections; toxins such as alcohol or poisons; Diseases- lupus, Guillain-Barre, lyme; vitamin B deficiency; hypothyroid or kidney disease
- S/S: numbness & tingling in hands, feet, and many other sites
- Treatment: same as post herpetic neuralgia; TENS units, massage

✓ **What Caregivers can do to help their loved one with Neuropathic Pain**

- Contact health care provider for assessment of condition
- Consider using a Pain Diary to note important information with provider
- Encourage your loved one to try a non-drug treatment to assist with pain