

Neuropathic Foot Ulcer

What is a neuropathic foot ulcer?

A neuropathic foot ulcer is an ulcer or wound caused by constant pressure, chronic (long-lasting) strain or trauma to a foot that has little or no sensation because of neuropathy. If the person also has diabetes, it is sometimes called a diabetic foot ulcer.

What is neuropathy?

Neuropathy is a nerve disorder. There are many types of neuropathy. One common cause of neuropathy is diabetes. Neuropathies can lead to numbness (loss of feeling), muscle weakness, loss of reflexes and sometimes pain in the feet and legs. They can cause changes in the shape of the foot, and gait (walking) changes. Foot deformities such as hammertoes can occur.

How did I get this ulcer?

When you lose feeling in your foot, you may not feel pain as your shoes cause blisters or calluses, or if you step on something. Because you don't know you are hurt, you continue to walk on the foot and may make the blister or wound worse. Calluses can also lead to ulcers. A foot that has changed shape or is weak because of neuropathy creates pressure points that can cause ulcers.

Will my wound heal?

Many things affect whether your wound will heal. For people who have good blood flow in their arteries, and who do not have bone infection, we expect all wounds to heal. Patients who have poor blood flow in their arteries or a bone infection heal in most, but not all, cases.

How can I prevent foot ulcers?

If you have lost feeling or have poor blood flow in your feet, or have diabetes, it is important that you check your feet every day. Look for calluses, injuries, ulcers or blisters. If you find problems early, they will be easier to treat. Neuropathic ulcers are dangerous because they can grow and become infected very quickly. If you see a callus, infected toenail, break in the skin or any sign of infection, tell your doctor immediately. **Do not try to treat the problem yourself!**

If you have neuropathy, you should get special shoes that help protect your feet from pressure, stress and trauma. If you have diabetes, you can help prevent neuropathy by keeping your blood glucose level as normal as possible. This helps protect the nerves in your body.

Moisturize your feet every day, but not between your toes or on ulcers. Wear clean cotton socks. Do not walk barefoot. See a podiatrist (foot doctor) for foot and nail care. Special shoes prescribed by your doctor may also help to decrease the pressure on your feet.

What do I do if I have a question?

If you are confused or have a question about your neuropathic foot ulcer, please call us at 212.932.4325, at any time. You can also find information at our website: www.ColumbiaWoundHealing.org.

This information is brief and general. It should not be the only source of your information on this health care topic. It is not to be used or relied on for diagnosis or treatment. It does not take the place of instructions from your doctor. Talk to your health care providers before making a health care decision.