

Non-Drug Pain Relief: For Peripheral Neuropathy

Peripheral Neuropathy

Peripheral neuropathy (nerve changes) happens when there is an injury to your peripheral nerves. Symptoms are caused by damage to the nerves that are further away from your brain and spinal cord. These distant nerves are called **peripheral nerves**. These changes most often happen in your fingers, hands, arm, toes, feet and legs.

Symptoms of peripheral neuropathy depend on the nerves that are affected. Symptoms can include the following:

- Pain (may be constant or come and go)
- Numbness, loss of feeling or tingling in your hands and feet
- Cold, pinching or burning feeling
- Trouble using your fingers to button shirts or tie shoes
- Changes in your ability to walk or move
- Stomach pain or cramps
- Problems with urinating or constipation

Non-Drug Pain Relief for Peripheral Neuropathy

Treatment may help to reduce the pain in your feet, legs, arms and hands. Treatment will not heal damaged nerves or bring back loss of feeling. Therapy can help to improve problems with walking, balance, coordination and pain. These treatments can lower your risk of falls and help prevent injuries.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

Your therapist may tell you to try the following **non-drug pain relief options** to manage your peripheral neuropathy:

- **Hand Massage**

- ▶ Use your hands or mini massager to gently stroke and rub sensitive areas for 3 to 5 minutes, several times a day. It may help to use massage oil or lotion to decrease friction on your skin.
- ▶ **Do not** massage areas being treated with radiation therapy or that have an open wound or a sore.
- ▶ Massage should not be painful. **Do not** rub your skin red. If your skin is sensitive, it may help to use a cotton ball to massage your skin.
- ▶ For more information about hand massage, ask for the patient education handout, **Non-Drug Pain Relief: Hand Massage**.

- **Roll Over Massage**

- ▶ Use a small therapy roller or empty bottle to gently roll over sensitive areas for 3 to 5 minutes each day.
- ▶ **Do not** massage areas being treated with radiation therapy or that have an open wound or a sore.
- ▶ Massage should not be painful. **Do not** rub your skin red.

- **Paraffin Wax Dip**

- ▶ Prepare your paraffin wax dip as directed. Let the wax cool slightly.
- ▶ Wash your hand or foot with warm water and soap and pat dry.
- ▶ Slowly dip your hand or foot into the paraffin wax. **Do not** touch the sides or bottom of the pot.
- ▶ Lift your hand or foot out of the pot and let the wax dry a few seconds. Continue to dip your hand or foot in and out of the wax 5 to 8 more times.
- ▶ Wrap your hand or foot in a warm towel.
- ▶ After 10 to 15 minutes, unwrap your hand or foot and remove the wax.

- **Athletic Tape**
 - ▶ Cut a strip of tape slightly shorter than the length of the bottom of your foot. Trim the tape to round off the edges.
 - ▶ Put one end of tape on the bottom of your heel.
 - ▶ Gently stretch the tape along the bottom of your foot. Secure the end of the tape at the base of your toes.
 - ▶ Take the tape off after 3 to 5 days. Use water and soap to remove the tape.
 - ▶ Remove the tape if you have any redness, itching or burning at or along the length of the tape.

- **Compression**
 - ▶ Talk with your therapist about compression therapy to help manage your peripheral neuropathy.

For more information about other non-drug pain relief options, ask for the following patient education handouts:

- **Non-Drug Pain Relief – Hand Massage** or view at: <https://healthsystem.osumc.edu/pteduc/docs/Non-DrugPain-Hand%20Massage.pdf>
- **Non-Drug Pain Relief – Heat Therapy** or view at: <https://healthsystem.osumc.edu/pteduc/docs/Non-DrugPainReliefHeatTherapy.pdf>
- **Non-Drug Pain Relief – Imagery** or view at: <https://healthsystem.osumc.edu/pteduc/docs/imagery.pdf>
- **Non-Drug Pain Relief – Distraction with Humor** or view at: <https://healthsystem.osumc.edu/pteduc/docs/distrhum.pdf>
- **Non-Drug Pain Relief – Relaxation with Breathing Exercises** or view at: <https://healthsystem.osumc.edu/pteduc/docs/relaxbre.pdf>
- **Non-Drug Pain Relief – Relaxation with Music or Sounds** or view at: <https://healthsystem.osumc.edu/pteduc/docs/relaxtap.pdf>

For more information on Peripheral Neuropathy, we encourage you to visit our video library at <http://cancer.osu.edu/patientedvideos>.