

Side Effects - **Nervous system changes (neuropathy)**

Sometimes cancer treatment can cause damage to your nervous system. This is called neuropathy (new-RAH-path-ee) or problems with nerve function. Sometimes these symptoms can be made worse by other conditions, such as diabetes, kidney failure, alcoholism and malnutrition.

Common symptoms include:

- Tingling, burning, weakness or numbness in your hands or feet
- Sudden, sharp, stabbing or electric shock pain sensations
- Loss of sensation of touch
- Loss of balance or difficulty walking
- Clumsiness
- Trouble picking up objects or buttoning clothes
- Hearing loss, jaw pain, constipation
- Being more or less sensitive to heat and cold

Symptoms can start when you begin chemotherapy or after treatment. If they do, tell your health care team. Symptoms can improve, but it may take up to a year or more.

Getting help:

- Treatments include medications, topical creams and pain patches.
- Other approaches include acupuncture, physical therapy and exercise.

Ways to prevent or manage problems related to nerve changes:

- **Prevent falls.** Move rugs out of your path and put rails on the walls and bathroom. Put bathmats in the shower or tub. Wear sturdy shoes inside and outside. Get up slowly after sitting or lying down.
- **Take extra care in the kitchen and shower.** Use potholders in the kitchen to protect your hands from burns. Be careful when handling knives or sharp objects. Ask someone to check the water temperature to make sure it's not too hot.
- **Protect your hands and feet.** Check your arms, legs and feet for cuts or scratches. When it's cold, wear warm clothes to protect your hands and feet.
- **Ask for help and slow down.** Let people help you with difficult tasks. Take your time.
- **Ask about pain medicine and integrative therapy practices.** You may be prescribed pain medicine. Acupuncture, massage, physical therapy and yoga may lower pain.

Talk with your health care team

- What symptoms or problems might I have? Which ones should I call you about?
- When will these problems start? How long might they last?
- What medicine, treatments and integrative therapies could help me to feel better?
- What steps can I take to feel better? What precautions should I take to stay safe?