



# Diabetes Wellness Newsletter

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## TACKLING NEUROPATHY - A LOOK AT A COMMON DIABETES COMPLICATION



Sunny summer greetings to the Mason County diabetes community! In this newsletter, we will discuss issues related to neuropathy. Neuropathy is a common complication of long-term or poorly-controlled diabetes that can cause pain, numbness, and tingling in the extremities. It can also increase the risk of infections and even amputations. Nerve damage can occur in other parts of the body as well, including the GI tract causing gastroparesis (slowed digestion), eyes, kidneys, and even the ears causing hearing loss.

The good news is that, with proper management, the symptoms of neuropathy can be improved and the risk of complications can be reduced. There are many resources to help, including your medical providers and those of us at the Mason General Diabetes Wellness Center.

Your insurance may also cover helpful services such as regular podiatrist referrals, nail care, and even shoes. I would encourage you to ask your insurance about these services if you feel you would benefit.

So, how can neuropathy be prevented and managed? Read more in this issue!

Have a great summer,

Sarah Fulkerson, Diabetes Wellness  
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## PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF NERVE DAMAGE



*Article Source: Diabetes In Control*

- Glycemic control: Tight glycemic (blood sugar) control is essential for preventing the development and progression of diabetic neuropathy. People with diabetes should aim for an HbA1c level below 6.5-7%. This equates to an average blood sugar of 140-155mg/dL. Regular monitoring of blood glucose levels and adjustment of diabetes medication may be necessary to achieve and maintain glycemic control. Please contact your physician or diabetes educator for help with this.

- Foot care: Foot care is crucial for preventing complications such as foot ulcers and infections. People with diabetes should inspect their feet daily for cuts, blisters, or other signs of injury. They should also keep their feet clean and dry, wear comfortable and supportive shoes, and avoid walking barefoot.
- Pain management: Pain is a common symptom of diabetic neuropathy and can significantly affect a person's quality of life. Pain management strategies may include over-the-counter or prescription pain medications, physical therapy, and nerve blocks. Non-pharmacological approaches such as acupuncture and mindfulness meditation may also be helpful.
- Nutritional support: Nutritional support can help manage diabetic neuropathy by providing essential vitamins and minerals that support nerve health. People with diabetic neuropathy should eat a balanced diet that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and healthy fats.
- Exercise: Exercise can improve nerve function and reduce the symptoms of diabetic neuropathy. People with diabetes should engage in regular physical activity, such as walking, swimming, or cycling, for at least 30 minutes per day, most days of the week. It is often safest to walk with a friend, as neuropathy can cause imbalance and unsteady gait.
- Medications: Several medications have been approved for the treatment of diabetic neuropathy, including antidepressants, anticonvulsants, and topical creams. These medications can help relieve pain and other symptoms associated with diabetic neuropathy.
- Education and self-management: Education and self-management are essential components of diabetic neuropathy management. People should be educated about the symptoms of diabetic neuropathy and the importance of proper foot care, glycemic control, and medication adherence. They should also be encouraged to play an active role in their care, monitoring their symptoms, and reporting any changes to their healthcare provider.

### THE DIABETES AND HEARING LOSS CONNECTION

*Article Source: Diabetes and Hearing Loss | Diabetes | CDC*

Over time, high blood sugar levels can damage small blood vessels and nerves in the inner ear. Low blood sugar over time can damage how the nerve signals travel from the inner ear to your brain. Both types of nerve damage can lead to hearing loss.

Hearing loss is twice as common in people who have diabetes as it is in people of the same age who don't. Even people with pre-diabetes (blood sugar levels higher than normal but not high enough yet to have type 2 diabetes) have a 30% higher rate of hearing loss than people with normal blood sugar levels.



## Signs of hearing loss

Hearing loss can happen slowly, so it can be hard to notice. Often, friends and family members will notice your hearing loss before you do.

Signs of hearing loss include:

- Often asking others to repeat themselves.
- Trouble following conversations with more than one person.
- Thinking that others are mumbling.
- Problems hearing in noisy places, such as busy restaurants.
- Trouble hearing the voices of small children and others with quiet voices.
- Turning up the TV or radio volume too loud for others who are nearby.
- Problems with your inner ear may also affect your balance.

## How to protect your ears

You can't reverse hearing loss, but you can follow these tips to help protect your ears:

- Keep your blood sugar as close to your target levels as possible.
- Get your hearing checked every year.
- Avoid other causes of hearing loss, including loud noises.
- Ask your doctor whether any medicines you're taking can damage your hearing and what other options are available.

You should have your hearing tested by an audiologist (a health care professional who evaluates your hearing for medical problems) when you first find out you have diabetes and then every year after. Make it part of your routine diabetes care. If you think you have hearing loss, talk to your doctor. They can help you decide if you should see an audiologist. Go to [www.audiology.org](http://www.audiology.org) to find an audiologist near you.

Hearing loss can be frustrating for you and your family, and it can affect your social life. There are many reasons to keep your blood sugar in your target range—protecting your hearing is just one of them. Plus, you'll feel better and have more energy while you do it!

## A PLANT-BASED DIET IMPROVES DIABETIC NEUROPATHY PAIN AND LOWERS BODY WEIGHT



*Article Source: Medical News Today*

A whole food, plant-based eating pattern reduces the pain of diabetic neuropathy according to research published in *Nutrition & Diabetes* by researchers with the Physicians Committee, California State University, East Bay, and the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

The pilot study put 17 adults on a low-fat plant-based eating plan for 20 weeks, with weekly nutrition classes. The researchers found significant improvements in pain. The participants also lost an average of 14 pounds.

"A dietary intervention reduces the pain associated with diabetic neuropathy, apparently by improving insulin resistance" notes **Neal Barnard, M.D.**, president of the Physicians Committee. "The same diet also improves body weight and reduces cholesterol and blood pressure."

Sixty percent of people with diabetes suffer from peripheral neuropathy, which is associated with hypertension, obesity, gait disturbances, amputations, anxiety, depression, and reduced quality of life.

For more information, check out: [www.pcrm.org](http://www.pcrm.org), or [www.forksoverknives.com](http://www.forksoverknives.com). If following an entirely plant-based diet, it's important to supplement with vitamin B-12 and discuss with your physician and Registered Dietitian.

## RECIPE: THAI CRUNCH SALAD WITH PEANUT DRESSING

6 servings

### Ingredients:

1/2 bunch kale  
1/2 head cabbage  
1/2 red bell pepper  
1 carrot  
2 green onions  
1/4 bunch cilantro (optional)  
1/2 cup shelled edamame  
(soy beans)  
1/4 cup peanut butter  
1/3 cup water  
1/4 cup sweet red chili sauce  
2 1/2 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce  
4 teaspoons rice vinegar  
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder  
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger  
Sriracha



### Directions:

1. Shred a mixture of kale and cabbage (or use pre-shredded mix). Thinly slice the pepper and onion and shred the carrot. In a large bowl, toss together all ingredients except dressing.
2. To make the dressing, in a small bowl, whisk together peanut butter, preferably unsweetened, and heated water. Stir in remaining ingredients. Add more garlic powder, ground ginger, or Sriracha to taste.
3. Add dressing and toss again.

Note: Add fresh mango and cucumber (diced or thinly sliced) for a variation. You can also substitute fresh mint (5 to 10 leaves, thinly sliced) for the cilantro. Used shelled edamame for a nut-free option. Edamame can often be found with frozen vegetables at the grocery store.