

How to Manage **Numbness & Tingling** at Home

This guide will help you understand:

What is numbness & tingling?

What causes numbness & tingling?

What you can do to help manage your numbness & tingling.

When you should talk to your healthcare team.

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What is Numbness & Tingling?

Numbness and tingling are a common symptom and can feel like pins and needles, prickling or numbness [*no feeling at all*]. It affects the hands and toes mainly and can come on suddenly, come and go or be something that is chronic [*there all the time*].



Tell your healthcare team if you have numbness & tingling and are finding it difficult to manage.

What causes numbness & tingling?

Many things can cause numbness & tingling. Some causes include:

- **Medications:** Some medication taken to treat different symptoms can sometimes cause numbness and tingling.
- **Treatments:** Like chemotherapy.
- **Nerve damage:** Caused by injury or a chronic illness such as kidney disease, liver disease, diabetes or multiple sclerosis.
- **Swelling:** Due to an injury or a chronic illness can put pressure on nerves.
- **Posture:** Sitting or lying awkwardly in one position for a long time can bring on numbness and tingling.

What you can do to help manage your numbness & tingling.

Managing numbness & tingling works best when you play an active role.

- Try to figure out if there is a cause for your numbness & tingling.
- Is it better or worse at different times?
- What helps or makes it worse?
- You may want to use a symptom diary to record information about your numbness & tingling. Tracking this information will help you talk to healthcare team about your numbness and tingling.

Physical activities you can try at home:

- **Medication:** If you take medicine for your numbness and tingling, take it as prescribed so your symptoms don't get too bad.
- **Gentle exercise:** If it is safe for you, do gentle exercises like walking, swimming, and riding a stationary bike every day.

- **Daily Stretching:** Stay flexible by stretching every day.
- **Heat or cold:** Apply a warm towel or heating pad, take a warm shower or bath. If you have swelling, ice packs to the area may help. Be careful if you have nerve damage from diabetes.
- **Drink plenty of water:** Only if you do not have fluid restrictions.
- **Limit or stop:** Alcohol, caffeine and nicotine to see if your symptoms get better.

Mental activities you can try:

- **Distract yourself:** Do something that you enjoy to try and keep yourself mentally busy. For example, crossword puzzles, Sudoku, needlework or video games.
- **Relax:** Try meditation, mindfulness or relaxation therapy. Learning to relax and to change the way you think may help you cope with numbness and tingling.

Relaxation techniques you can try at home.

Ask if someone on your healthcare team can help you get started. You can also learn some on your own. Some techniques include:

- **Progressive muscle relaxation:** Focus on slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group.
- **Deep breathing exercises:** Slow your breathing to the point where you are as relaxed in your breathing as possible. Breaths should be deep and fill your lungs.
- **Meditation:** Sit or lie in a comfortable position for 20 minutes. Be aware of your breathing, your sensations (including your numbness and tingling), your thoughts, and feelings.
- **Guided Imagery:** Form mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation.
- **Yoga:** Can relax your breathing, ease muscle tension, and energize your mind and body.

- **Massage:** Helps reduce all over muscle tension and pain, which can help you relax.
- **Hydrotherapy:** Uses flowing water to relax muscles.
- **Music and art therapy:** Listening, playing music, drawing and painting can help you to relax.

When you should talk to your healthcare team.

Speak with your healthcare team if numbness and tingling is a problem for you. Your worries and questions are important to you and them. Your healthcare team may speak to you about the different medicines you can take.

- Let them know if you think your medical condition or medications are the reason for your numbness and tingling.
- Let your healthcare team know if a medication is working for you or if you're having side effects. You may have to try a few different ones to know what works best for you.
- Talk to them before taking over-the-counter medications, including vitamins and herbal remedies.

Get immediate help if you have weakness, numbness or tingling in both legs, lose bowel or bladder control, and/or have symptoms of a stroke. Symptoms of a stroke may include sudden:

- Numbness, tingling, weakness or loss of movement in your face, arm or leg, especially on only one side of your body;
- Vision changes;
- Trouble speaking, confusion or trouble understanding simple statements;
- Problems with walking or balance; and/or
- Severe headache that is different from past headaches.

Tips on sharing your symptoms with your healthcare team:

Make some notes about your numbness and tingling symptoms and tell your healthcare team about them.

- Has there been a change in your numbness and tingling?
- What does your numbness and tingling feel like? How bad is it?
- When does it happen and how long does it last?
- What makes it better or worse? What have you tried already?
- Make a list of all the medications you are taking including over the counter medications.

Notes:
