

## My Feet Feel Numb, Tingly, or Like They're Burning

### *Understanding Peripheral Neuropathy of the Feet*

#### What Is Causing Numbness, Tingling & Burning in the Feet?

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Peripheral neuropathy is damage to the nerves that carry sensation and signal to the feet, most commonly caused by diabetes, but also linked to chemotherapy, vitamin deficiencies, alcohol use, and certain autoimmune conditions.

#### What Does It Feel Like?

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- Numbness or tingling in the toes and feet, often in a symmetric “stocking” pattern
- Burning or shooting pain, frequently worse at night
- Reduced ability to feel the ground, temperature, or small injuries
- A sense of unsteadiness or poor balance
- Muscle weakness in the feet or lower legs in more advanced cases

#### What Causes It?

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- Diabetes — by far the most common underlying cause
- Chemotherapy or certain other medications
- Vitamin B12 or other nutritional deficiencies
- Chronic alcohol use
- Autoimmune conditions or hereditary nerve disorders
- Kidney disease

#### What Makes It Worse?

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- Poorly controlled blood sugar
- Prolonged standing or walking without proper footwear
- Tight or ill-fitting shoes
- Alcohol use
- Symptoms are frequently reported as more noticeable at night

#### When Should I Be Concerned?

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- Any open sore or wound on the foot that isn't healing — this needs urgent attention given the higher risk of unnoticed injury
- Sudden weakness or new foot drop
- Rapidly worsening or spreading symptoms
- Signs of infection such as redness, warmth, or drainage

#### The Good News

While physical therapy can't reverse nerve damage from the underlying cause, it plays a vital role in improving balance, gait safety, strength, and fall prevention — which meaningfully improves quality of life and safety.

Most patients see measurable improvement in balance and function within **4 to 8 weeks** of a targeted program, though nerve symptoms themselves depend heavily on managing the underlying cause.