

TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR PAIN

Living with neuropathic pain can be frustrating and exhausting. By recognising your pain as neuropathic pain and discussing this with your doctor you can take the first steps to finding the right treatment for you. You may have to try several different treatments and there is no guarantee that you will be totally pain free but it is important to remember that you will be in control of your pain.

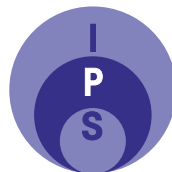
A MYSTERY SOLVED?

If the symptoms described in this leaflet sound like the pain you have, then make an appointment to see your doctor. Take this leaflet and, if you need to, use it to help you describe your pain to your doctor. If the mystery pain you have lived with does turn out to be neuropathic pain, the good news is that there are treatments available to help you to control it.

REFERENCES

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3. Meyer-Rosberg K, Kvarnstrom A, Kinnman E *et al*. Peripheral neuropathic pain – a multidimensional burden for patients. *Eur J Pain*. 2001; 5: 379-389.
4. Global Neuropathic Pain Survey: Breaking Down Barriers to Understanding. Summary Report. Commissioned by Pfizer and the Neuropathic Pain Network. March 2007.
5. Nicholson B and Verma S. Comorbidities in Chronic Neuropathic Pain. *Pain Med*. 2004; 5(S1): S9-S27.
6. Dworkin RH, Backonja M, Rowbotham MC *et al*. Advances in Neuropathic Pain: diagnosis, mechanisms, and treatment recommendations. *Arch Neurol*. 2003; 60: 1524-1534.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR NEUROPATHIC PAIN:



www.irishpainsociety.com



www.chronicpainireland.org



www.diabetes.ie



YOUR MYSTERY PAIN COULD HAVE A NAME

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT VISIT
www.mysterypain.ie

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Stabbing
pain



Shocking
pain

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www.mysterypain.ie

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR
ABOUT NEUROPATHIC PAIN AND
THE TREATMENTS AVAILABLE

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DO YOU SUFFER FROM AN UNEXPLAINED PAIN?

Perhaps you picked up this leaflet because you suffer from a frustrating pain you cannot explain – one that you can't seem to relieve with typical painkillers¹. Maybe this pain has been with you for a while now – a few months or even more. If this type of pain sounds familiar to you, then you might be suffering from a condition called **neuropathic pain**¹.

WHAT IS NEUROPATHIC PAIN?

Pain is the body's way of telling us that something is not working properly or that we've injured ourselves². This type of pain serves an important warning or protective role². But when pain continues long after the original injury has healed², it becomes a real problem that is difficult to live with³. This pain is known as chronic pain.

Neuropathic pain is a type of chronic pain that results from damage to either the nerves that normally sense pain or other parts of the nervous system that transmit pain signals, such as the spine or the brain². Neuropathic pain has no protective function, but once it has been properly diagnosed, the good news is that it can be treated⁴.

WHAT DOES NEUROPATHIC PAIN FEEL LIKE?

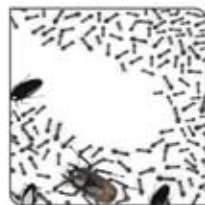
Everybody's pain is different. If you have neuropathic pain, the pain you have can be felt anywhere in your body⁵ and you may experience one or more of the following sensations⁶:

- Burning
- Crawling
- Stabbing
- Shocking

How would you describe your pain?



Burning pain



Crawling pain



Stabbing pain



Shocking pain

WHAT CAUSES NEUROPATHIC PAIN?

Many people develop neuropathic pain without any specific cause. However, a number of conditions can directly damage nerves and lead to neuropathic pain, such as:

- An accident (i.e. deep tissue wound, broken bones)
- Multiple sclerosis
- Amputation of a limb (phantom pain)

Neuropathic pain can also be a relatively common complication of other conditions which affect the nerves such as:

- Diabetes
- Shingles
- Back pain

I THINK I MIGHT HAVE NEUROPATHIC PAIN – WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT?

If you think that you have neuropathic pain, visit your doctor. Be prepared to clearly describe the pain you feel and which parts of your body it affects.

HOW CAN I MANAGE MY NEUROPATHIC PAIN?

There are some things you can do that will help you to manage your neuropathic pain:

- **Keep a pain diary**, noting down the worst and mildest pains you felt in the last 24 hours and anything you did that triggered the pain or made it feel better, and whether your pain interfered with your sleep. It may be useful to bring this diary when you next visit your doctor.
- **Regularly discuss your pain with your doctor**, especially if it is not improving or you have concerns about it.

- **Talk openly about your pain** with family and friends.
- **Get advice from your doctor** about exercise and relaxation techniques that may help you.
- **Remember** that pain can be a long-term condition that needs long-term management, so be patient.

DON'T SUFFER ALONE – HELP IS AVAILABLE!

The pain you feel is real and, with the correct help, could be effectively managed. Make an appointment with your doctor and describe your symptoms clearly. They could be able to provide a diagnosis for your pain and will discuss the treatment options with you. You may not find the solution straight away but there is help available.

FINDING THE RIGHT TREATMENT

Knowing the best way to discuss and communicate your symptoms with your doctor is a big step towards finding the right treatment for you. You may be offered a number of options, including:

- Medicines
- Physiotherapy (for assessment and management)
- TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation)
- Psychological strategies (to help you come to terms with your pain, relaxation techniques, psychotherapeutic methods)
- Acupuncture

Because neuropathic pain can vary between patients, the way that doctors can treat it may vary as well.