



BC Cancer Agency

CARE + RESEARCH

An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Patient Information: Treating nerve damage (neuropathy)

Protect hands and feet

- Avoid extremes of temperatures, and wear warm gloves and footwear in cold temperatures.
- Check water temperature with your elbow or an unbreakable thermometer before bathing or dishwashing (should be less than 110 F or 43.3 C).
- Use pot holder when cooking and gloves when washing dishes or gardening.
- Wear well-fitting shoes with good support.
- Inspect skin regularly for injury and infection.
- Your balance may be affected by nerve damage in the feet – avoid activities that could lead to injuries from falls.

Muscle weakness

- Remove clutter, furniture with wheels and scatter rugs in your home to avoid falls.
- Install safety equipment in the bathroom (e.g. bars in the shower or bath; raised toilet seat) and handrails in stairways.
- Wear clothes with zippers rather than buttons, elastic waistbands, pullover tops, shoes with Velcro closures.
- Physiotherapy may be helpful.

Bowel program

- Prevent and treat constipation promptly.
- Eat plenty of high fibre foods (vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts)
- Increase fluid intake.
- Use stool softeners and laxatives as required.

Treatment of pain

- Your doctor may prescribe medications for nerve pain, including Gabapentin, Nortriptyline or Lyrica.
- Anesthetic medications such as lidocaine may also be prescribed.
- Hand and foot massage may be soothing.
- Tiger balm or capsaicin cream application may be helpful.

Vitamins and supplements

1) **B complex vitamins** - The vitamin B family helps prevent and treat injured nerves and includes:

- B1 (thiamine), found in whole-grain cereals, bread, red meat, egg yolks, green leafy vegetables
- B2 (riboflavin), in whole-grain products, milk, meat, eggs, cheese and peas
- B3 (niacin), in protein-rich foods such as meat, fish, brewer's yeast, milk, eggs, legumes
- B5 (pantothenic acid), in meat, whole grain cereals and legumes
- B6 (pyridoxine), in liver, meat, brown rice, fish, butter, wheat germ
- B9 (folic acid), in yeast, liver, green vegetables, and whole grain cereals
- B12 (cyanocobalamine), in liver, meat, egg yolk, poultry and milk.

B vitamins are water soluble and are not stored in the body, so must be taken every day through food or in supplements. All of these B vitamins can be obtained in a B Complex formulation. Look for B Complex or Stress Formula 100 at the local pharmacy or health food store.

2) **Alpha-lipoic acid**, an antioxidant, reduces pain and numbness. Usual dose is 200 mg per day.