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National Cancer Institute

at the National Institutes of Health

Questions About Cancer?
1-800-4-CANCER

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Managing Chemotherapy Side Effects

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Posted: 11/24/2008

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Nerve Changes

To order free copies of this fact sheet, please call 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER).

About nerve changes

Some chemotherapy can cause nerve problems. You may have a numb, tingling, burning, or weak feeling in different parts of your body. It often begins in your hands or feet. This is called "peripheral neuropathy."

Ask what you should expect. Talk with your doctor or nurse to learn about medicine or other things that can help you.

Call your doctor or nurse as soon as you notice any of these changes:

Pain

Tingling, burning, or weak feeling in your hands or feet
 Pain when you walk

Movement problems

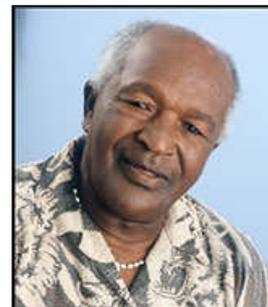
Falling
 Losing your balance or feeling dizzy
 Numb hands or feet
 Shaking or trembling
 Sore, tired, or achy muscles
 Trouble holding or picking things up

Hearing problems

Trouble hearing

Stomach problems

Hard stools or constipation
 Stomach pain



"My fingers and toes felt numb and tingly. It was hard to button shirts. I got help from my wife. To keep from getting cuts, I always wore shoes."



Try these tips from others:



"Prevent falls."

Move rugs out of your path so you won't trip.
 Put up rails on the walls and in the bathroom.
 Put bathmats in the shower and bathtub.
 Wear sturdy shoes.
 Use a cane.

"Take extra care in the kitchen and shower."



Use hot pads in the kitchen to protect your hands from burns.

Before you bathe, ask someone to make sure the water in the bath or shower is not too hot.



"Protect your hands and feet."

Wear shoes inside and outside your home.

Wear gloves when you are working outside or in the kitchen.

Check your feet for cuts every day. Sit down and use a small mirror or ask someone to check for you.

Use ice packs to help your hands and feet feel better.



"Ask for help."

Ask for help with things such as buttoning clothes, using the computer, opening jars, or holding a pen.

Slow down and give yourself more time to do things.

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What medicine can help?
3. Can you give me the name of a physical therapist or someone who can help me?
4. When will these problems start?
5. How long will these problems last?



Free Services to Learn More

National Cancer Institute Cancer Information Service

Phone: 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

TTY: 1-800-332-8615

Chat Online: www.cancer.gov/help

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