

Numbness and tingling in hands and feet

This information is about numbness and tingling in the hands and feet. Some cancer treatments can damage the nerves that carry messages between the brain and spinal cord (central nervous system) to the rest of the body (the peripheral nerves). This causes numbness or tingling in the hands or feet ([peripheral neuropathy](#)). Peripheral neuropathy is most often caused by certain anti-cancer drugs. But sometimes it can be caused by surgery, or by a tumour growing close to a nerve and pressing on it. Rarely, radiotherapy may damage nerves in the treated area.

Peripheral neuropathy usually affects the hands, feet and lower legs. The symptoms depend on which nerves are affected. Symptoms are usually mild to start with and gradually get worse. As well as numbness or tingling, you may find it hard to do fiddly tasks such as fastening buttons or tying shoelaces. Peripheral neuropathy can make you feel unsteady on your feet.

It is important to let your doctor or nurse know as soon as possible if you have any of these symptoms or if your symptoms are getting worse. If an anti-cancer drug is causing your symptoms, your doctor may change the dose or type of drug. They can suggest things to help and may give you medicines to help relieve your symptoms. Peripheral neuropathy usually improves slowly a few months after the treatment has ended. But for some people it can be a long-term side effect. If your hands or feet are affected, it is important to protect them as much as possible.

Tips for dealing with numbness or tingling in hands and feet

- Keep hands and feet warm by wearing gloves and socks in cold weather. Be careful that hot water bottles are not too hot.
- Wear gloves. For example, wear gloves when gardening or washing up. When cooking, wear oven gloves and take care to avoid burning your hands.
- Wear well-fitting shoes or boots. Wear clothes without buttons or zips, or shoes without laces.
- Do not walk around barefoot and check your feet often to treat any scratches or other injury as soon as possible. Be careful when cutting your nails.
- Check the temperature of hot water with your elbow before baths, showers or doing the washing-up. Turn the hot water temperature control (thermostat) to a lower setting or have a temperature control fitted.
- Make sure rooms are well lit. Always put a light on if you get up during the night. Keep areas that you walk through (such as hallways) free of clutter. Remove things like loose rugs, that you could trip over.
- Make sure you have rails to hold on to on the stairs. You could add rails to the bath or shower.
- Get advice from a physiotherapist about walking aids if your balance is affected. If you are finding it hard to do daily tasks such as washing or dressing, you can ask to be referred to an occupational therapist. They can recommend the best aids and equipment for you.

Other information

- If you have symptoms that cause problems with walking or daily activities, you may be entitled to financial help. This could include [Personal Independence Payment \(PIP\)](#) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Or [Adult Disability Payment](#) in Scotland. You can call the Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00** for more [information](#).
- If you live in England, Scotland or Wales, you need to contact the [DVLA](#) to tell them you have peripheral neuropathy. If you live in Northern Ireland, contact the Driver and Vehicle Agency ([DVA](#)).
- If your symptoms mean you have to make changes to your lifestyle, it is natural to feel isolated and frustrated. It may help to share your experiences at a [local cancer support group](#). Some people get support from online groups. Visit our [Online Community](#) to talk with others who understand what you are going through.

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Macmillan Cancer Support resources

We have more information on our [website](#), including [audiobooks](#). Or you can order our free booklets and leaflets on orders.macmillan.org.uk such as:

- MAC12921 [Side effects of cancer treatment](#) (also available as audiobook)

We produce information in a [range of formats](#) and [languages](#). To order these, visit our website or call our support line on **0808 808 00 00**.

Further Macmillan support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. Or visit macmillan.org.uk to [chat online](#) to one of our team.

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using Relay UK on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the [Relay UK app](#). Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

If you want to share your experiences or ask questions, you can find others who understand on our [Online Community](#). Our free [Macmillan Buddy service](#) can arrange weekly calls with a friendly volunteer who understands what you're going through.

Other useful contact details

- British Red Cross – visit www.redcross.org.uk or call **0344 871 11 11**
- Living Made Easy – visit livingmadeeasy.org.uk
- Scope – visit www.scope.org.uk
- DVLA – visit www.gov.uk/peripheral-neuropathy-and-driving or call **0300 790 6808**
- DVA (Northern Ireland) – visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/driver-vehicle-agency-dva-northern-ireland or call **0300 200 7861**

Notes and questions
