

Numbness or tingling in hands or feet

Some cancer drugs such as chemotherapy and targeted therapies, can cause numbness or tingling in the hands and feet. This is called peripheral neuropathy. It is due to the effect of treatment on nerves outside the brain and spinal cord. These nerves are called the peripheral nerves. Symptoms of peripheral neuropathy can include:

- numbness, or a prickly or tingling feeling in your hands or feet
- pain or sensitivity
- difficulty doing up buttons, fastening jewellery or other fiddly tasks
- difficulty with balance or coordination.

It is important to let your doctor or nurse know if you have any of these symptoms. They may lower the dose of the drug or change it. Peripheral neuropathy usually improves slowly a few months after the treatment has finished, but sometimes it is permanent. If these symptoms continue, let your doctor or nurse know.

Surgery may sometimes cause nerve damage. Rarely, radiotherapy may damage nerves in the treated area. Symptoms can also be caused by a tumour pressing on a nearby nerve, or certain types of cancer can cause the body to make a substance that can damage peripheral nerves.

Other health conditions, such as diabetes, can also cause numbness and tingling in the peripheral nerves and cancer treatment may worsen symptoms.

If your hands or feet are affected, it is important to protect them as much as possible.

Tips for managing numbness or tingling in hands or feet

- Wear gloves when working with your hands. For example, when gardening or washing up.
- Use pot holders and take care to avoid burning your hands when cooking.
- Check the temperature of water with your elbow to make sure it is not too hot before baths, showers or doing the washing up.
- Wear clothes without buttons or zips. Wear gloves and warm socks in cold weather.
- Avoid walking around barefoot. Wear well-fitting shoes or boots.
- Check your feet regularly for any problems.
- See a chiropodist (a foot specialist) for foot and nail care if you need extra help.
- If you drive, you must let the DVLA know that you have peripheral neuropathy.
- If your symptoms are mild, you may not need additional help in managing them. If they are more troublesome a physiotherapist can help with physical problems such as balance and co-ordination.
- If daily tasks are difficult, an occupational therapist may be able to help with aids and equipment.

Local resources:

Resource	Contact details

National resources:

Resource	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Red Cross • Disability Living Foundation • DVLA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.redcross.org.uk Tel: 0844 871 1111 • www.dlf.org.uk Tel: 0333 323 7200 • www.gov.uk/peripheral-neuropathy-and-driving

Further information

www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/side-effects-and-symptoms/other-side-effects/peripheral-neuropathy.html

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on be.macmillan.org.uk

- Side effects of cancer treatment
- Understanding chemotherapy

More information and 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

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

We produce information in a range of formats and languages. To order these visit macmillan.org.uk/otherformats or call our support line.