



Charcot-Marie-Tooth Association

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Suggestions for Managing Your Disease

(Ideas from the Mayo Clinic.)

Take care of your feet. Tight shoes and socks can worsen pain and tingling, and may lead to sores that won't heal. Wear soft, loose cotton socks and padded shoes. You can use a semicircular hoop, which is available in medical supply stores, to keep bedcovers off sensitive or hot feet.

Soak your feet or hands in cold water. If you have burning pain, cool off your feet or hands in cold, but not icy, water for 15 minutes twice a day. This is particularly useful at night. After soaking, rub on petroleum jelly to soften your skin.

Exercise. Ask your doctor about an exercise routine that's right for you. Regular exercise may reduce neuropathic pain and can help maintain unaffected muscles.

Reduce your consumption of alcohol. There is a danger in over-consumption of alcohol because of the risk of falls and the fact that alcohol can worsen any neuropathy.

Limit caffeine. Try to avoid foods or drinks high in caffeine, including coffee, chocolate, and sodas. Caffeine can worsen pain.

Eat healthy meals. Emphasize low-fat meats and dairy products and include lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in your diet.

Quit smoking. Smoking can worsen symptoms. If you smoke, talk to your doctor about ways to quit.

Massage your hands and feet. Or, have someone massage them for you. Massage helps improve circulation, stimulates nerves, and may temporarily relieve pain.

Coping Skills

Living with chronic pain or disability presents daily challenges. Some of these suggestions may make it easier for you to cope:

Set priorities. Decide which tasks you need to do on a given day and which can wait for another time. Stay active, but don't overdo.

Get out of the house. When you have severe pain, it's natural to want to be alone. But this only makes it easier to focus on your pain. Instead, visit a friend, go to a movie, or take a short walk.



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Seek and accept support. It isn't a sign of weakness to ask for or accept help when you need it. In addition to support from family and friends, consider joining a support group for CMT patients or for neuropathy or chronic pain. Support groups aren't for everyone, but they are good places to hear about coping techniques or treatments that have worked for others. You'll also meet people who understand what you are going through.

Prepare for challenging situations. If something especially stressful is coming up in your life, such as a move or a new job, knowing what you have to do ahead of time can help you cope.

Talk to a counselor or therapist. Insomnia, depression, and impotence are all possible complications of peripheral neuropathy. If you experience any of these, you may find it helpful to talk to a counselor or therapist in addition to your primary care doctor. There are treatments for each of these conditions that can help. ★

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