

# Diabetes, What's the Big Deal?



By:  
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Well it is a big deal. The center for disease and prevention (CDC) recently reported that there is a growing incident of diabetes in this country. Currently 20.8 million Americans have diabetes and over 200,000 people die from the disease or related complications each year. In Missouri, diabetes is the 4th leading cause of death for persons aged 55 - 64 years and cost the state more than 2 billion dollars a year. There are 121,000 hospitalizations across our state and over 4,700 people die in Missouri each year from this disease.

What does this have to do with physical therapy? Well, I am glad you asked. In the first paragraph it states over 200,000 people die each year from diabetes or its complications. One of the complications is diabetic or peripheral neuropathy. You can have peripheral neuropathy without having diabetes, and it is very commonly associated with diabetes.

Peripheral neuropathy is a condition where the nerves, usually of the feet and lower legs start to deteriorate (this can also happen in the hands and forearms). Why this happens is not totally understood, and a likely cause is that the very end of the nerve fibers, which supply the feet and lower legs, don't get the oxygen or nutrients they need, through the blood stream, to stay healthy.

When you have diabetes, there is too much sugar in the blood. The sugar is not being removed from the blood stream because of the lack of production of insulin from the pancreas. When there is too much sugar in the blood, it interferes with the transportation of oxygen and nutrients. This now brings us back to the nerve endings not getting enough oxygen or nutrients to stay healthy. So the nerve endings die, this usually happens slowly and progressively. This is peripheral neuropathy.

OK, I am still rambling, and have we gotten to the physical therapy part yet??

Well, when you have peripheral neuropathy you can have tingling, burning, sharp, stabbing pains of your feet and lower legs. People report that their feet hurt so much they can't sleep at night, and that the pain interferes with walking, shopping and doing things around the house.

Eventually the pain is replaced with numbness because the nerves continue to die, and finally they get where they don't feel anything. While this is a relief from the pain people endure, there is a much more serious problem if you can't feel your feet.

It is not unusual for someone with neuropathy to cut or injure their foot and not even know they have hurt themselves. Maybe the cut is just very slow to heal. Too many times a wound gets infected and can

lead to amputation and sometimes death.

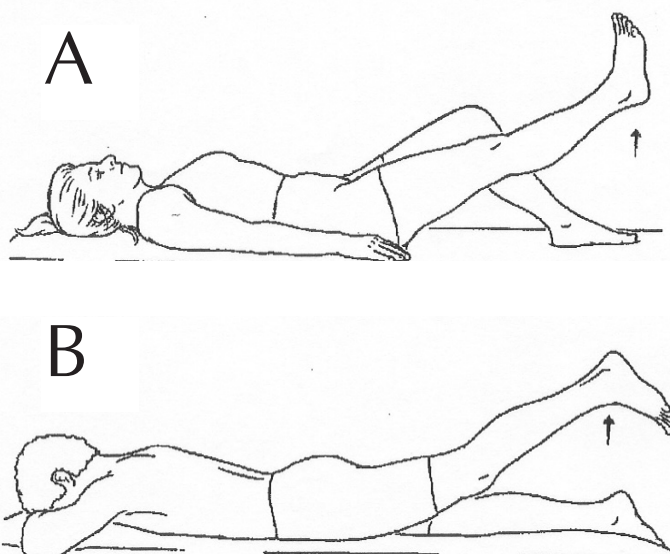
When you can't feel your feet you may start to lose your balance and you either start to fall, or you slow down considerably so you don't fall. People often

mentioned this in an article several months ago. Anodyne produces an infrared light (monochromatic irradiation) that liberates the nitric oxide from the hemoglobin and increases circulation to the nerve endings. If we increase circulation, more oxygen and nutrients are brought to the nerve endings, helping them recover the loss of sensation.

When I first heard of the treatment I was amazed by the reported outcomes, one of those too good to be true stories. But we started being one of the few facilities in St. Louis that offers this treatment and we are now starting to see the incredible results ourselves. This is what several of the clients have to say:

*The anodyne treatment I received was effective. The treatment resulted in an increase in sensation of my feet and lower legs; it has also improved my balance. It is not a miracle, it has taken a couple of months, but it has been well worth my time and effort. The home exercise program I have received has also been very helpful in strengthening my legs*

"The Anodyne has helped increase my circulation and has helped my legs feel better. I have more sensation and the treatment has been very worthwhile."  
-Ranka Goldman



start walking with a larger base of support (you spread your legs out a little) and you walk more flat footed. This is when friends and family start asking you to use a cane or a walker because they are worried that you will fall.

Ok, so now you are starting to see where physical therapy may be helpful. There are certainly exercises that help increase balance, strength and agility and some of them are included in this article. And these can help a lot to prevent falls and maintain your strength...but exercises will not prevent the diabetes from continuing to damage the nerve endings.

A new treatment that is doing something about the nerve damage is Anodyne. I briefly men-

*and improving my balance.*  
Kent Owens

*For me, the anodyne has helped decrease my pain. I am taking less medication for pain and the treatments have really helped improved the quality of my life. I was only able to stay on my feet for 1 hour before the pain made me sit down, now I can go for 4-5 hours. I am really enjoying my time with my grandbabies.*  
Norma Allen

*It has taken a while but my feet feel almost normal for the first several hours of the day. The numbness and tingling is almost gone, I am improved over 50% from when I first started.*  
Don Maragni

*My pain started almost a year ago. All resources had failed until I started with the anodyne treatment. Within a couple of weeks my quality of life had improved by 50%. I climb better, walk better and on New Years Eve I was able to go square dancing.*  
Marlene Tomczak

The results are different for everyone and they include a decrease of pain, an increase of sensation, balance and strength. Eighty percent of the people we have seen report feeling 30-50% better.

If you or anyone you know suffers from diabetic neuropathy please talk to you doctor about Anodyne treatment and start getting some relief today.

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Touted by physicians as one of the best physical therapists in St. Louis, Deb Lavender is a physical therapist with over 25 years of experience providing hands-on or manual therapy. Her vast experience has allowed her to develop special skills in neck and low back pain, plantar fasciitis, frozen shoulder, joint pain and replacement, and women's health issues (such as pain with pregnancy, pelvic floor pain, urinary incontinence, and osteoporosis). She owns Des Peres Physical Therapy in Des Peres and accepts all insurances.