



There are multiple events or conditions that cause nerve damage, which affects how pain signals are transmitted from certain parts of the body to the brain. If unrepaired, this damage can cause a type of long term or chronic pain that is called **nerve pain / neuropathic pain**.

### **WHAT IS NEUROPATHIC PAIN?**

Neuropathic or nerve pain (NP) is a long-term or chronic pain disease that results from nerve damage. It can be caused by different diseases or conditions. Worldwide nerve pain affects as many as **26 million people**. Neuropathic or nerve pain may affect larger areas of the body or it can be restricted to a smaller area, in this case it is called **localized neuropathic pain (LNP)**.

### **WHAT CAUSES NEUROPATHIC PAIN?**

Neuropathic or nerve pain may occur in the absence of an obvious visible cause (e.g. an accident, an injury, a chemical burn). There are several external situations that can directly damage nerves and lead to neuropathic pain, such as:

- Amputation of a limb (phantom pain, stump pain)
- Surgery (scar pain, post-surgery pain)
- Trauma or accident

Neuropathic pain is also a common complication of other diseases, including nerve damage after shingles or herpes zoster infection (postherpetic neuralgia or PHN), nerve damage after HIV infection, nerve damage resulting from diabetes mellitus (diabetic polyneuropathy or DPN), multiple sclerosis, or nerve damage in the spine or lower back (low back pain).

### **WHAT ARE THE TYPICAL NEUROPATHIC PAIN SYMPTOMS?**

Neuropathic pain is a chronic pain condition often described by patients with symptoms such as 'shooting pain', 'burning pain', or 'stabbing pain'. It can also feel like 'pins and needles'. In addition, neuropathic or nerve pain patients can suffer from symptoms such as allodynia (when a normally unpainful stimulus such as a light touch or clothing becomes painful) and hyperalgesia (when a mild or moderate stimulus causes severe pain).

### **HOW IS NEUROPATHIC PAIN DIAGNOSED?**

Neuropathic pain is often difficult to diagnose. This can lead to patients with neuropathic or nerve pain being insufficiently treated on a 'trial and error' basis that may persist over many months or even years. A correct and early diagnosis is crucial to find the right treatment and to relieve symptoms of neuropathic pain. It is therefore important that patients describe their symptoms in as much detail as possible to their doctor. As part of this process, the doctor will conduct a physical examination and ask about the medical history of the symptoms.

### **WHAT CAN PATIENTS DO?**

There are treatment options available. It is important to get active. Do you have symptoms that you would describe as 'burning pain', 'shooting pain', or 'stabbing pain'? Do you have sensitive skin and/or feel a sensation like 'pins and needles' on the skin?

If you have chronic pain and think that it might be neuropathic or nerve pain, please fill out the **'my pain questionnaire'** on **www.mypainfeelslike.com** and see your doctor. It is a very useful tool to improve the communication between patients and doctors, as it supports the doctor in making an accurate diagnosis of the cause of chronic pain. It will be most useful for you to accurately describe your chronic pain, where it occurs on your body and if it is triggered by anything in particular. In preparation for a doctor's appointment, patients should thoughtfully complete the 'my pain questionnaire', print out the results, and discuss them with their doctor.