

NATUROPATHIC TREATMENT OF DIABETES AND DIABETIC NEUROPATHY

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Some people experience it as tingling or burning; for others, it manifests as numbness or pain that may interfere with daily activities. *Diabetic neuropathy* is damage to nerves caused by high blood sugar that occurs in more than half of diabetics. You may have initially noticed it in your fingertips and toes, but it can also impair nerve transmission to your organs, including your bladder, heart and stomach. A healthy diet and regular exercise are key to keeping blood sugar levels under control, but what other natural strategies are available to lower blood sugar and alleviate diabetic symptoms including neuropathy?

STRESS MANAGEMENT

As if sending your blood pressure sky-rocketing wasn't enough, stress can also have the same effect on your blood sugar. Many people report that minor daily annoyances such as not being able to find your keys in the morning and poor time management are major contributors to stress, so make it a priority to organize your home and your schedule. Proper nutrition and good quality sleep will also change the way you perceive stress and allow you to cope more effectively with any curveballs thrown your way. Try breathing exercises, journaling, meditation, and visualization to relieve stress and keep you calm and collected in even the toughest situations.

ACUPUNCTURE

This ancient Asian therapy involves the insertion of hair-thin needles into specific locations on the body called *acupuncture points*. It has been shown to lower blood sugar and blood fat, increase *insulin sensitivity* (the body's ability to respond to insulin more effectively), improve neuropathy, bladder control, appetite, and thirst, and reduce obesity. If you're needle-shy, consider *acupressure*, the puncture-free version in which treatment points are stimulated using pressure.

MASSAGE THERAPY

Poor blood circulation, neuropathy, and high blood sugar combine to form the ideal conditions for developing skin ulcers, and aggressive wounds and infections. Massage therapy improves blood circulation, nerve sensation, lowers blood sugar and stress, and just plain feels good!

CINNAMON

Skip the bun but keep the cinnamon – less than a teaspoon per day has been shown to lower blood sugar and improve insulin sensitivity. Sprinkle this delectable spice onto your morning cereal, blend it into smoothies, or stir it into your favorite hot beverage. If the flavour provides too much tickle for your tastebuds, ask your local supplement supplier about cinnamon capsules.

FIBRE

We love it for promoting a satisfying BM (bowel movement), but did you know fibre also helps to lower your BS (blood sugar)? Eat more whole grains such as oats, rye, and brown and wild rice, or take supplemental fibre in the form of oat bran or psyllium husk.

VITAMIN B12

I can probably give more than 12 reasons to recommend this vitamin – not only does it help with neuropathy, it's also used to boost energy levels, lower heart disease risk, and quash stress. Oral and sub-lingual supplements are available at your local supplement store, but talk to your medical doctor or naturopath about B12 injections.

ALPHA LIPOIC ACID

Talk about value – alpha lipoic acid (ALA) is a potent antioxidant that is especially well-documented for the treatment and prevention of diabetic neuropathy, and is an approved medical therapy for this condition in Germany. Additionally, it has been shown to protect the insulin-producing cells of the pancreas and lower blood sugar, and may improve cholesterol levels. When scouring your local supplement aisle, be sure you don't confuse it with the other ALA – *alpha-linolenic acid*, the omega-3 fat found in flaxseeds.

A COMBINED TREATMENT APPROACH MAXIMIZES SUCCESS

Incorporating these simple solutions into your diabetes management plan will give you greater control over stubbornly high blood sugar levels and help to improve the symptoms and complications of chronic diabetes. Always remember to check your blood sugars frequently when implementing new blood sugar-lowering strategies.

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