Here to Help

List of Medical and Non-Medical practioners for those with Peripheral Neuropathy

CALGARY NEUROPATHY ASSOCIATION (2023)©

THE IMPORTANCE OF A HEALTHCARE TEAM

Building a healthcare team is crucial when managing a chronic condition because chronic conditions often require ongoing, multidisciplinary care. These conditions can be complex, with a range of physical, emotional, and lifestyle-related factors to consider. A well-structured healthcare team ensures that you receive comprehensive and coordinated care, addressing not only the symptoms but also the underlying causes and potential complications of your condition. By having a team of healthcare professionals with expertise in various aspects of your health, you benefit from specialized knowledge, personalized treatment plans, and a holistic approach to managing your chronic condition, ultimately enhancing your quality of life and well-being.

The information contained below is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Consult with your primary care doctor to discuss additional options.

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TYPES OF MEDICAL AND NON-MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS FOR PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY

Peripheral neuropathy is a condition that affects the peripheral nervous system, leading to various symptoms like numbness, tingling, and pain in the extremities. Managing peripheral neuropathy often involves a team of healthcare professionals and non-medical experts who can provide valuable support and care. This resource provides an overview of the types of professionals you can turn to for assistance in dealing with peripheral neuropathy.

MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS

- Your family doctor or general practitioner can play a crucial role in managing peripheral neuropathy by providing routine check-ups, prescribing medication, making referrals and coordinating your overall care.
- This person is tasked with being your medical team coordinator.

NEUROLOGISTS

- Neurologists are medical doctors who specialize in diagnosing and treating diseases and disorders of the nervous system, including peripheral neuropathy. They can offer a thorough evaluation, diagnostic tests, and recommend appropriate medical treatments.
- Often they do not support the patient past the diagnosis, they will revaluate if symptoms change.

PHARMACIST

- These

PAIN MANAGEMENT SPECIALISTS

- These physicians focus on managing chronic pain, a common symptom of peripheral neuropathy. They can offer various pain management techniques and medications to help alleviate discomfort.

PHYSICAL THERAPISTS

- Physical therapists can assist in improving your physical function, mobility, and balance. They can design exercises and rehabilitation programs tailored to your needs.

PHYSIATRIST

- Physiatrists often perform electrodiagnostic studies such as electromyography (EMG) and nerve conduction studies (NCS) to assess and diagnose conditions involving the nerves and muscles.
- Physiatrists focus on the rehabilitation of patients who have experienced injuries, surgeries, or medical conditions that have left them with physical impairments.
- They help manage chronic conditions like arthritis, chronic pain, and amputations, working to reduce pain and enhance functional abilities.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

- Occupational therapists can help you adapt your daily activities and environment to accommodate any physical limitations caused by neuropathy.

INTERVENTIONAL RADIOLOGIST

- These specialists use imaging techniques like fluoroscopy and ultrasound to guide minimally invasive procedures, such as nerve blocks and injections.

ORTHOPEDIC SPECIALISTS/SURGEONS

- In some cases, surgery may be necessary to correct deformities or alleviate pain caused by neuropathy-related issues. Orthopedic surgeons can perform these procedures. Orthopedic Surgeons specialize in musculoskeletal conditions including ones of the feet and ankles.

SPECIALIST FOR YOU UNDERLYING CONDIITION

- This could be any number of things but two common examples are:
  - Endocrinologist for diabetics. They help manage blood sugar levels.
  - Rheumatologist to investigate autoimmune or connective tissue disorders.

THOSE WHO SPECIALIZE IN FEET

PODIATRISTS

- A podiatrist is a medical doctor who specializing in diagnosing, treating and preventing foot and ankle conditions. Podiatrists specialize in foot care and can provide valuable guidance for managing foot-related complications often associated with peripheral neuropathy.

PEDORTHISTS

- These professionals specialize in orthotic and footwear solutions. They can help you find appropriate footwear to reduce the risk of foot ulcers and injuries. They specialize in design, manufacture and fitting of custom footwear and orthotic insoles.

ORTHOTISTS

- An orthotist is a healthcare professional, but their scope of practice is broader than a pedorthist. Orthotists specialize in designing, fabricating, and fitting orthotic devices that can support or correct various parts of the body, not just the feet. They assess the patient's condition, mobility, and alignment and then design and provide custom orthotic devices like braces, splints, and supports to help improve function and quality of life. This includes ankle-foot orthotics.

FOOT CARE NURSE

- A foot care nurse is a registered nurse or licensed practical nurse (LPN) with specialized training in foot care and lower limb assessment. Foot care nurses can perform tasks such as nail care, callus and corn removal, wound assessment, and education on proper foot hygiene. They can also provide preventative casre and early intervention for foot problems.

PODIATRIC MEDICAL ASSISTANT OR ESTHETICIAN (PEDICURIST)

- These practioners, with a focus on foot care, provide non-medical aesthetic and cosmetic foot care services, such as pedicures, nail care, cuticle care, exfoliation, and moisturizing. The do not diagnose or treat medical conditions, but some may be able to identify issues and direct individuals to a professional.

MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Living with chronic pain and a long-term condition like peripheral neuropathy can be emotionally challenging. Mental health professionals can provide support and strategies for coping with the emotional aspects of your condition.

CLINICAL OR PAIN PSYCHOLOGISTS

- Clinical Psychologists specialize in assessing and treating emotional and psychological aspects of chronic pain. They can provide therapies such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT, which can help individuals develop coping strategies and manage the emotional impact of pain.

- Pain Psychologists specifically focus on the psychological aspects of pain management. They use various therapies such as biofeedback, relaxation training, and mindfulness techniques.

PSYCHIATRISTS

- Psychiatrists are medical doctors who can provide medication management for pain-related conditions like depression or anxiety. They may also provide psychotherapy.

BEHAVIORAL THERAPISTS

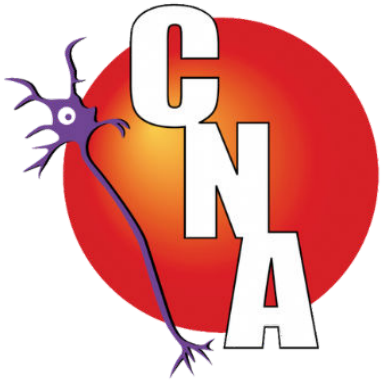
- Behavioral therapists use evidence-based techniques to help individuals modify their responses to pain, manage pain-related stress, and improve overall functioning. These therapists often work closely with physical therapists and other medical professionals.

SUPPORT GROUPS

- Joining a neuropathy support group can connect you with others who are experiencing similar challenges. Sharing experiences and advice with peers can be a valuable source of emotional support.

OTHER HELPFUL HEALTHCARE TEAM MEMBERS

- **A Support Group** specific to your condition, or to peripheral neuropathy. Support groups like the CNA provide emotional support, information and education, coping strategies, motivation for self-care, a sense of community, social connection and validation of feelings like feeling alone in the fight.
- **Trusted Friends and Family** are vital on your team. Share your journey with close, non-judgemental friends and family who can provide emotional support and whom you can ask to assist with activities when needed.
- **Social worker** to help navigate the systems (health and funding)
- **Counsellor** to learn strategies to cope with pain, stress, and anxiety
- **Patient Advocate** to help individuals understand their rights, navigate the health care system, understand treatment options, make informed decisions, and communicate with health care providers effectively
- **Financial counsellor to** assist individuals in managing healthcare costs understanding insurance coverage, and exploring financial assistance programs
- **Holistic therapies** to find relief through complementary therapies like massage therapy, acupuncture, meditation, tapping and yoga, amoung other things
- **Registered Dietitian or Nutritionists** can provide a personalized meal plan that supports your health goals. Good nutrition can play a significant role in managing peripheral neuropathy symptoms.
- **Advocacy and Empowerment organizations** to encourage individuals to become advocates for themselves and empower them to communicate effectively with healthcare providers and make informed decisions about their care
- **Centers of Excellence** is a term often used to designate a specialized healthcare facility or institution that excels in a particular area of medicine, research, or patient care. These centers are known for providing comprehensive and highly specialized care, often utilizing the latest advancements in treatment and research to improve outcomes for patients with specific medical conditions. These centers typically have multidisciplinary teams of healthcare professionals, including neurologists, physical therapists, pain management specialists, and others who are experts in managing peripheral neuropathy.



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