



Diabetic Neuropathy Is No Day at the Beach

For many, summer means an eventual beach vacation. That's something to get excited about, but for those with diabetic neuropathy — which roughly 50% of diabetics will eventually experience — it's no time to let down your guard.

Diabetic neuropathy is nerve damage to the feet (and hands) that diminishes or eliminates one's ability to detect pain or sense changes in temperature or pressure. The condition itself, however, can be painful or cause tingling or numbness. That means new injuries/conditions may go unnoticed, which can spell big trouble.

Many diabetics experience circulatory issues, which impairs healing. Scrapes, cuts, burns, and punctures flying under the radar can lead to ulcers. Ulcers may become infected. Infections can spread to neighboring tissue or bone. If an infection cannot be corralled, amputation is a stark possibility. That chain of events isn't on anyone's bucket list.

If you have diabetic neuropathy and are heading from your vacation digs to the beach, wear something on your feet; properly fitted closed-toe sandals or water shoes (for short asphalt jaunts) are good choices. Concrete and asphalt heat up rapidly under the summer sun and are home to many objects that can harm feet.

Sand can become blistering hot too! In their ecstasy, some people ditch their footwear as soon as they reach the sand, sometimes to their detriment (immediate or delayed). If you're on the move, don't the footwear. It can also protect you from broken seashells, jellyfish stings, and other beach hazards.

Persons with diabetic neuropathy should have their feet examined at least once per year at our office. If you are due, give us a call today.



Healthy Calves, Happier Feet and Ankles

A leg's calf muscle is actually two distinct muscles: the gastrocnemius and soleus. These muscles converge at the Achilles tendon, which attaches to the heel bone.

The gastrocnemius is the larger of the two muscles and is visible when a person flexes their calf. Its starting point is the back of the thigh bone. It's loaded with fast-twitch fibers, which are critical for explosive movements like sprinting, jumping, and changing direction.

The soleus muscle is "hidden," running beneath the gastrocnemius, and originates at the back of the knee. It is noted for its slow-twitch fibers, which are important for endurance and stability.

Strong calf muscles aren't just important for sports. They're integral to everyday activities such as "pushing off" when walking, navigating stairs, and rising from a seated position. They also serve as shock absorbers.

If the calf muscles are weak or tight, stress is shifted to other soft tissues and bones of the lower leg and foot, raising the risk of overuse injuries — Achilles tendinopathy, shin splints, stress fractures, and plantar fasciitis to name a few. Ankle sprains are more likely too.

Tight calf muscles can also restrict range of motion in the ankle joint and force foot joints to move in abnormal fashion, elevating the chance of injury. Keep in mind that exercise can cause calves to tighten. That's why more vigorous stretching should follow exercise, not precede it. Calf muscles have a tendency to tighten as we age; certain medical conditions (e.g., diabetes) may prompt it too.

Good calf stretches and strengthening exercises can be found online, but our office would be happy to field any questions or offer suggestions. We're just a phone call away.

Mark Your Calendars

- June 5** Hot Air Balloon Day: A Pacific Flyer was the fastest — 245 mph in 1991.
- June 14** Flag Day: A 17-year-old, Bob Heft, designed the 50-star U.S. flag. It was originally a history project for school; his grade was B-.
- June 16** Father's Day: Back in the day, many men wore neckties to work. Ward Cleaver, the dad on *Leave It to Beaver*, wore them to baseball games.
- June 19** Juneteenth: The 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery, was ratified on Dec. 6, 1865.
- June 20** Summer solstice: Jumping over a solstice bonfire supposedly brings good luck, assuming you clear it.
- June 28** Paul Bunyan Day: When the folk-hero lumberjack spoke, limbs sometimes fell from trees.
- June 30** Meteor Day: The Geminid meteor shower peaks in December; 120+ visible meteor displays per hour.



John Denver Liked It on His Shoulders

Sunshine sometimes gets a bad rap. Yes, too much without protection is a recipe for sunburns and skin cancer, but too little is detrimental as well. Let's focus on sunshine's benefits.

Few foods have significant amounts of natural vitamin D, though some are fortified. However, a type of cholesterol in the skin absorbs sunshine's ultraviolet rays, kick-starting the production of vitamin D. Vitamin D enables the body to better absorb calcium and phosphorus, which are vital for good bone health. It can also help boost blood vessel health, regulate blood pressure, and lower the risk of insulin resistance. If you're considering supplements, confer with your doctor.

Sunshine also elevates the body's level of serotonin, a chemical that improves mood. From November through February, however, sunshine's benefits may lag — angle of the sun, shorter days, less skin exposure, etc. As a result, some people experience fatigue and depression: seasonal affective disorder. Artificial-light devices can be therapeutic.

Indoor bacteria that trigger or exacerbate asthma and allergies often wither when confronted by direct sunshine. Open the shades and curtains to enhance air quality.

Sunshine can also improve sleep quality. In simplified terms, when your body is exposed to bright sunshine in the morning, it helps to keep you more alert throughout the day. In turn, this will make you sleepier at night.

Some people have health conditions that are irritated by direct sunlight. However, for most others, just a few minutes of direct sunlight each day is enough to reap its full benefits: 10–15 minutes for the fair-skinned and 20–30 minutes for those with darker skin (which has more melanin, a natural sunscreen). Sunlight between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. is ideal. Apply sunscreen once you reach those thresholds.



Greek Yogurt with Honey and Walnuts (Yiaourti Me Meli)

Yield: 7 servings; prep time: 10 min.; total time: 10 min.

A delicious Greek yogurt with honey recipe, drizzled with walnuts, infused with vanilla essence, and sprinkled with fragrant cinnamon! If you are having a sweet tooth but looking for something more nutritious than your usual desserts, this 2-minute, no-bake dessert will amaze you.

Ingredients

- 2½ cups strained Greek yogurt (is creamier, thicker, and richer in flavor than other yogurts)
- ¾ tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup walnuts (as fresh as possible ... older nuts may have a bitter aftertaste)
- ½ cup of honey (organic thyme honey yields best results)
- cinnamon powder

Directions

1. To prepare this delicious Greek yogurt with honey dessert, start by toasting the walnuts. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spread the walnuts in a single layer on a baking sheet, and toast for 7–8 minutes or until they turn golden and fragrant. Transfer the toasted walnuts to a bowl, add the honey, and blend to coat. Set aside to cool down for 1–2 minutes.
2. In the meantime, stir together the Greek yogurt and vanilla extract, and divide among 6–7 dessert bowls. Spoon the honey-walnut mixture over the yogurt, and sprinkle with cinnamon powder.
3. Serve immediately or store in the fridge. Enjoy!

Recipe courtesy of www.mygreekdish.com.

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Archnemeses of the Feet

When a person's foot arches are minimal or nonexistent, that person is flatfooted. The condition affects 20%–30% of people, more women than men.

There are two types of flatfoot disorders: flexible and rigid. Flexible flatfoot is by far the most common. With flexible flatfoot, the arches are present at rest, but as soon as they bear weight, they vanish. Young children may be flatfooted for several years until their arches are fully developed; however, some will remain flatfooted for life. Most people with flexible flatfoot from birth never experience any pain or discomfort, but fatigue might be an issue. Fallen arches are not energy-efficient for walking and running.

Some people develop flexible flatfoot in their midlife years ("progressive collapsing flatfoot deformity"), which is more likely to cause pain. Risk factors include obesity, tight Achilles tendons, a worn posterior tibial tendon (lower leg), and trauma. Progressive flatfoot can eventually throw joints out of whack and open the door to painful arthritis.

With rigid flatfoot, a rare condition, arches are always absent. If you're short, you won't be able to tip-toe. Its primary causes are bone irregularities and congenital defects.

Other triggers for flatfoot include certain neurological conditions, diabetes, overuse, and pregnancy (temporarily).

When people with flat feet experience discomfort, it's likely to be heel or arch pain that worsens with activity; stiff, fatigued feet; swelling or inflammation at the inner ankle; and difficulty walking. Conservative treatments include rest, supportive footwear, orthotics, a good stretching regimen, physical therapy, and shedding some excess poundage. Unresponsive cases may require surgery.

Don't ignore lingering foot or ankle pain. Schedule a comprehensive exam at our office to find relief.

