

Sensory Symptoms are Your Warning Light. Don't Ignore.

Symptoms of peripheral neuropathy come in all different types. Usually, the symptoms you experience will depend on the type of nerve that is damaged. Sensory nerve damage affects the sense of touch and more.

Anyone who has dealt with peripheral neuropathy will tell you that it's a tricky situation. Not only can its symptoms range from persistent and irritating to downright life-threatening...but they come in many different forms, to boot.

Mostly, these differences are owed to the fact that your nervous system has an incredibly wide range of responsibilities. It's not an overstatement to say that your nervous system is in charge of literally everything your body does and experiences. So when part of it gets damaged, there is any number of different ways the consequences might manifest themselves.

Symptoms of peripheral neuropathy are typically determined by what type of nerve is being targeted. There are **three main types of nerves** in your body – [sensory](#), [motor](#), and [autonomic](#). They're in charge of three different bodily functions, each one being relatively self-explanatory.

Your **sensory nerves** are in charge of relaying sensory information from your body extremities to your brain and spine. The **motor nerves** are in charge of sending signals out from the brain and spine, telling your body when to contract its muscles and move around. And your **autonomic nerves** are basically in charge of everything else that your body does without your permission. Things like your heart rate, blood pressure, gastrointestinal muscles, and other bodily functions that you don't consciously think about are the domain of your

autonomic nerves.

Symptoms of peripheral neuropathy are going to present themselves differently depending on which type of nerve is being impacted. Similarly, thick nerve fibers and thin nerve fibers sometimes display different symptoms as well.

Sensory Symptoms: Positive Feedback vs. Negative Feedback

Damage to sensory nerves, understandably enough, leads to what are called sensory symptoms. [They're among the most common symptoms](#) of peripheral neuropathy, and they also tend to be the first symptoms to present themselves. For the most part, your sensory nerves are among the thinnest nerves in your body, so they tend to be much more vulnerable to damage.

Your sensory nerves also come with the most directly bothersome consequences when they do become damaged. For the sake of simplicity, sensory neuropathy symptoms tend to be grouped into two main categories. Positive and negative. Each one depends upon the thickness of the nerve being damaged, as differently-sized nerve fibers respond to the damage of peripheral neuropathy in different ways.

Positive Symptoms: When Nerves Go Berserk

Smaller sensory nerve fibers will exhibit what are known as **positive sensory symptoms**. This essentially means that your body is providing you with an active response to the damage that is afflicting your nerve endings. When smaller nerve fibers become damaged, they respond by overacting and firing off in ways that they're not supposed to.

This can cause a wide range of sensations.

Sometimes misfiring nerves respond entirely too much to what might be a relatively normal amount of stimulation (socks and shoes, bedsheets, and so forth). Other times, positive sensory systems can involve your nerves responding when there isn't actually any stimulation at all, firing off for no reason whatsoever.

Negative Symptoms: Nervous (System) Breakdown

Your larger sensory nerve fibers respond to the damage inflicted by peripheral neuropathy in a very different way from their thinner counterparts. Instead of overreacting and firing off when they shouldn't be, large nerve fibers tend to respond to damage by simply shutting down altogether.

Your large fibers tend to have an "I'll take my toys and go home, then!" attitude when it comes to nerve damage. So they are more likely to display what is known as **negative symptoms**. This means that your sensory nerves are either reporting less information than they should be...or not reporting any information at all.

Dysesthesia Sensory Symptoms



Dysesthesia describes a common symptom of sensory neuropathy in which your nerves are overreacting to what would normally be a completely acceptable level of stimulation.

Individuals with peripheral neuropathy often wind up having to make special considerations in their lives for symptoms related to dysesthesia, as your overactive nerves can turn even everyday activities into torture. Socks and shoes can become unbearably painful, and the feeling of bedsheets on toes can become thunderously irritating.

Paresthesia Sensory Symptoms

Your small nerve fibers respond to peripheral neuropathy in what we'll call a much more active way than the large nerve fibers do. Their positive symptom response pattern means they like to send you a bunch of information that isn't really meant to be sent in the first place, and the results can be pretty irritating.

Specifically, **paresthesia** refers to what is also known as **phantom sensations** – feelings aren't actually caused by any real stimulation or input. This can take many forms. The most common are:

- buzzing
- pins and needles
- tingling
- strange vibrations
- bizarre, unexplainable sensations

While the pain caused by paresthesia is not always debilitatingly high, it can impact people's lives in serious ways – mostly by interrupting sleep patterns and causing anxiety through constant irritation.

Anaesthesia Sensory Symptoms

Negative sensory neuropathy symptoms, when they take their most severe form, will show up as a condition known as **anesthesia**. You probably know this word already, and it's not too different here from how it's normally used in a medical context. Anesthesia refers to a complete lack of feeling, meaning that your nerves aren't reporting any information back to your central nervous system.

This can be dangerous for a number of different reasons, mostly because your sensory nerves are your body's "warning light." When something is wrong, you can miss important messages your body is trying to send you. A cut on your foot, for example, can go unnoticed and lead to infection...or worse, to amputation. This isn't alarmist, either – it's a real risk when peripheral neuropathy is in play, which is why it's recommended to [take safety considerations](#).

Don't Wait. Be Proactive.

The sensory symptoms of peripheral neuropathy are not to be ignored. Your sensory nerves can be impacted in either direction, meaning they can over-act or under-act, depending on how they're damaged. Either condition is pretty dangerous, as your senses of feeling and pain are basically your body's built-in warning system, in more ways than just one.

Perhaps one of the most problematic aspects of peripheral neuropathy is that it typically does not just go away on its own. In fact, quite the opposite. Nerve damage continues to get worse, until the underlying causes are addressed, including chronic systemic inflammation. That rogue vibration in your foot might be just as easily ignored. But don't. The earlier you catch peripheral neuropathy and begin to take steps to help your body heal your nerves, the better chance they can.