



# spotlight on health

## Understanding Diabetic Nerve Pain

by Dr. Albert Ray

(NAPSA)—Approximately 5 million people are affected by a condition called diabetic peripheral neuropathic pain, or diabetic nerve pain. Over time, diabetes can harm nerves in the legs, feet, arms or hands, causing the slightest movement or light touch of the skin to trigger pain.

### Highly Misunderstood

Diabetic nerve pain is a highly misunderstood and often misdiagnosed condition. In fact, a recent Harris Interactive online survey of about 600 physicians who see at least one diabetes patient in a typical week found that almost all those surveyed (97 percent) believe that diabetic nerve pain is often misdiagnosed.

Additionally, other research has shown that many people at risk for developing diabetic nerve pain are unaware that the condition exists, causing many misconceptions. Below are some examples of how diabetic nerve pain is misunderstood and the facts about the condition:

**“This pain is all in my head, or maybe I’m just getting old.”**

Pain from nerve damage is not a result of aging. It is a real medical condition in patients with diabetes caused by various factors, including high blood sugar and/or smoking. Millions of people have it and most of the time it can be managed.

**“There is nothing I can do to stop further nerve damage.”**

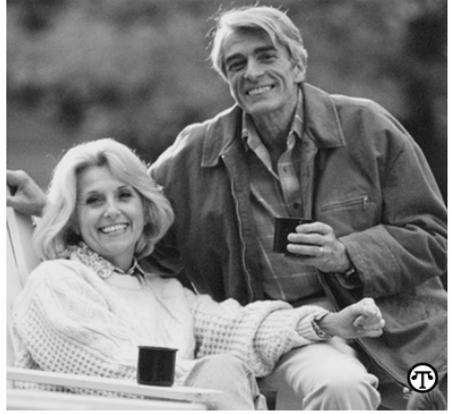
It is possible to stop further nerve damage through exercise and by keeping blood sugar levels under control. Research also shows that walking regularly and doing low-impact exercise can help reduce leg pain. Before starting any exercise plan, it’s important to talk with a physician.

**“The nerve damage causing my pain can be cured.”**

Unfortunately, there are no medications that can reverse nerve damage, but the good news is there are medications available to help manage diabetic nerve pain.

**“My physician doesn’t need to understand how diabetic nerve pain has impacted my life.”**

Diabetic nerve pain can negatively affect a person’s quality of



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life, making it physically more challenging to participate in normal activities. The symptoms of diabetic nerve pain can also make people feel older than their years, alone and sad. Talking to a health care provider about how the pain may have impacted your life can help him or her determine the best treatment plan.

### **Talk Beyond Pain: Understanding Diabetic Nerve Pain Program**

To clear up misconceptions about diabetic nerve pain and to help patients communicate better with their physicians, the National Pain Foundation and Eli Lilly and Company are sponsoring a new program called Talk Beyond Pain: Understanding Diabetic Nerve Pain. The program includes tools such as an educational guide to help you talk to your physician about your diabetic nerve pain symptoms and how they are impacting your life, as well as a personal diary for you to share with your physician. Talk Beyond Pain: Understanding Diabetic Nerve Pain materials are free and can be downloaded at [www.TalkBeyondPain.com](http://www.TalkBeyondPain.com). The company also provided both content and financial support to the NPF for the educational campaign. Survey participants were unaware of who sponsored the survey.

• *Dr. Albert Ray is Chairman of the Board for the National Pain Foundation, a non-profit organization that advances the recovery of persons in pain through information, education and support.*