Peripheral Neuropathy
(General Information)

Peripheral neuropathy refers to a problem of the peripheral nervous system. The peripheral nervous system consists of all the *motor* (movement) and sensory nerves that connect the brain and spinal cord to the rest of the body. They are the nerves outside the brain and spinal cord. Sensory nerves allow you to have feelings. These are the nerves that can tell you if something is hot, cold, painful, etc. The motor nerves are the nerves that supply the muscles and allow you to move about. They are the nerves that tell the muscles what to do. The problems that come with peripheral neuropathies may be extremely complex and vary greatly from case to case. The problem depends upon the nerve that is damaged and what functions or work that nerve provides.

COMMON FINDINGS ASSOCIATED WITH PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY MAY INCLUDE:

- Muscle weakness (when motor nerves are involved)
- Pain; numbness (when sensory nerves are involved)
- Redness
- Burning or tingling *sensations* (feeling) in the affected areas, especially the arms and legs (extremities)

SYMPTOMS AND PHYSICAL FINDINGS RESULT FROM:

- Disease of a single nerve (mononeuropathy or mononeuritis)
- Several nerves in asymmetric areas of the body (mononeuritis multiplex)
- Many nerves simultaneously (polyneuropathy, polyneuritis, or multiple peripheral neuritis)

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT CAUSES OF PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY INCLUDING:

- *Trauma* (injury) such as *fractures* (broken bones), penetrating injuries such as a knife or gunshot wound
- Underlying disease processes injuring nerves
- Vitamin and metabolic deficiencies

Your caregiver will help you with the best course of treatment for your particular problem.

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