



SURGICAL DECOMPRESSION FOR TREATMENT OF DIABETIC NEUROPATHY

This summary will provide you with information about an alternative way to treat diabetic neuropathy called *surgical decompression* or *decompressive surgery*.

What is Diabetic Neuropathy?

Diabetic neuropathy is a nerve disorder. It is common in people with diabetes. First symptoms may include numbness, pain, or tingling in the feet or legs. Over the years, nerve damage may worsen. This can lead to problems with the digestive tract and sexual organs. The loss of feeling in the feet may increase the risk of developing ulcers or infections in the feet.

Treatment of Diabetic Neuropathy

Treatment often includes controlling blood sugar levels by diet and medication and taking special care of the feet. Some medications can relieve pain, burning, or tingling of the feet.

Some doctors are using an alternative way to treat diabetic neuropathy. It is called *surgical decompression*, or *decompressive surgery*. This therapy has gained public attention. It is thought that in people with diabetic neuropathy, the nerves may be damaged by pressure in certain areas of the legs and arms. Therefore, some doctors are relieving the pressure with surgery. The procedure aims to restore feeling to the abnormal parts of the body.

Neurologists from the American Academy of Neurology are doctors who treat diseases of the brain and nervous system. Experts in neurology reviewed all of the available studies about surgical decompression in patients with diabetic neuropathy. By reviewing medical research studies, they tried to determine if surgical decompression was an effective treatment approach for diabetic neuropathy.

USE OF SURGICAL DECOMPRESSION TO TREAT DIABETIC NEUROPATHY

Currently, there is not enough evidence* to recommend or discourage the use of surgical decompression for treating diabetic neuropathy. More research is needed to determine potential benefits and harms. At this time, the benefits of the surgery are considered unproven.

TALK TO YOUR NEUROLOGIST

People with diabetic neuropathy considering surgical decompression or other treatments should seek the advice and care of a neurologist. Your doctor will recommend an individualized treatment plan. Ask your neurologist for more information and services.

This is an evidence-based educational service of the American Academy of Neurology. It is designed to provide members and patients with evidence-based guideline recommendations to assist with decision-making in patient care. It is based on an assessment of current scientific and clinical information, and is not intended to exclude any reasonable alternative methodologies. The AAN recognizes that specific patient care decisions are the prerogative of the patient and the physician caring for the patient, based on the circumstances involved.

* After the experts review all of the published research studies they describe the strength of the evidence supporting each recommendation:

Strong evidence = More than one high-quality scientific study

Good evidence = At least one high-quality scientific study or two or more studies of a lesser quality

Weak evidence = The studies, while supportive, are weak in design or strength of the findings

Not enough evidence = Either different studies have come to conflicting results or there are no studies of reasonable quality



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