Nerve pain, also called neuralgia or neuropathic pain, occurs when a health condition affects the nerves that carry sensation to the brain. It is a particular type of pain that feels different from other kinds of pain.

It often feels like a shooting, stabbing or burning sensation. Sometimes it can be as sharp and sudden as an electric shock. People with neuropathic pain are often very sensitive to touch or cold and can experience pain as a result of stimuli that would not normally be painful, such as brushing the skin.

It’s often worse at night. It might be mild or it might be severe.

Nerve pain can be a result of damage to the nerves following a disease or injury. The damage might cause the nerves to misfire and send pain signals to the brain. This usually happens due to a disease (such as [diabetes](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/diabetes) or [vitamin B12 deficiency](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/b12-deficiencies)) or an injury to the brain, spinal cord or a nerve.

People who have neuropathic pain often find that it interferes with important parts of life such as sleep, sex, work, and exercise.

Some people with neuropathic pain become angry and frustrated, and may have [anxiety](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/anxiety) and [depression](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/depression).

Nerve pain types

There are different types of nerve pain, including:

* **post-herpetic** — affecting the same area as the shingles rash, this can happen after you've had [shingles](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/shingles) (herpes zoster)
* [**trigeminal**](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/trigeminal-neuralgia) — causing pain in the jaw or cheek
* **occipital** — causing pain at the base of your skull that can spread to the back of your head
* **pudendal** — causing pain in the ‘saddle area' between the legs

There are many ways to treat nerve pain. Treating the underlying cause, if there is one, is the first step.

[Painkillers](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/pain-relief-medicines) and a range of different medicines can help. So can non-drug treatments like [exercise](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/fitness-and-exercise), [acupuncture](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/acupuncture) and [relaxation techniques](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/relaxation-techniques-for-stress-relief).