

Diabetes and Your Joints

Diabetes can cause changes in your musculoskeletal system, which is the term for your muscles, bones, joints, ligaments, and tendons. These changes can cause numerous conditions that may affect your fingers, hands, wrists, shoulders, neck, spine, or feet.

Symptoms of diabetes-related musculoskeletal problems include muscle pain, joint pain or stiffness, lessened ability to move your joints, joint swelling, deformities, and a “pins and needles” sensation in the arms or legs.

Some musculoskeletal problems are unique to diabetes. Others also affect people without diabetes. For instance, diabetes can cause skin changes such as thickening, tightness, or

nodules under the skin, particularly in the hands. Carpal tunnel syndrome is frequently seen in people with diabetes, as is trigger finger (a catching or locking of the fingers), although these conditions are commonly seen in people without diabetes, as well. The shoulder joint may also be affected in diabetes. And, of course, the feet are susceptible to problems caused by diabetes.

Most of these conditions can be successfully treated with anti-inflammatory medications, steroid injections, or other therapies. It is important to mention any troubling symptoms to your doctor.

Ask yourself the following questions, which address some of the more frequent

symptoms people have when diabetes affects their muscles, ligaments, tendons, or joints. If you answer “yes” to any, consult your doctor.

- Do you have stiffness in your hands that affects your ability to move or use them?
- Do your fingers get “locked” in certain positions?
- Do you have numbness or tingling in your hands, arms, or legs?
- Do you have stiffness or decreased motion in your shoulders?
- Do you have muscle pain or swelling?

