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Q I have *peripheral neuropathy* and over the last few months, I have variable *pain and numbness in the feet*? Is my neuropathy getting worse?

A: Although pain is a common symptom, it is not a good indicator of progression of peripheral neuropathy. Some forms of neuropathy are not painful and pain may vary in frequency and severity. Also the level of pain tolerance varies from person to person.

If sometimes the pain is better, it may not mean that the neuropathy has improved. Over time, the underlying disease process if left untreated may cause gradual loss of nerve fibers. This may result in increased numbness and sometimes improvement in pain. In this case, less pain means further worsening of the neuropathy.

Numbness on the other hand is a reliable symptom to measure improvement. Increased numbness suggests progression of neuropathy. However, the most reliable symptom to follow is weakness. If you have weakness and this is improving, then your neuropathy is more likely getting better. Neurologic evaluation would help in clarifying this further.

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