

Cycling for people with polyneuropathy

What's the issue?

Polyneuropathy or peripheral neuropathy (PN) is a general term for a group of diseases that affects motor and/or sensory nerves outside the brain and spinal cord. It is more common in elderly people and can be caused by multiple conditions, under which diabetes, infections and nutritional deficiencies. It often leads to pain, numbness and weakness in the affected body parts.

What are the challenges when cycling?

PN in the lower limbs will often make it harder to mount your bike. Weakness and loss of proprioception can lead to a lack of balance while mounting and cause pain when pedalling against the wind or in a too high gear.

PN in the upper limbs can give local pain when holding your handlebar. In the case of carpal tunnel syndrome, the hands will start to tingle after some time.

What can you do about it?

Choose a bike with a dropped top tube. This will make it easier to mount. You could as well opt for an e-bike in order to make pedalling easier and cover longer distances. Make sure your bike fits you well. Your back should be straight and your knees not too much bent when riding.

Make sure you have something to hold on to – or a buddy to assist you - when stepping on or off your bike.

Do some mobility and stretch exercises for your neck, lower back and hands before you start your ride and during breaks. (You 'll find a home exercise programme on my website [https://www.bikingbodyplanet.com/](https://www.bikingbodyplanet/))

Avoid steep and bumpy roads, and pedal in a low gear, especially when you have the wind on top. Always cycle at your own pace. Listen to your body and stop if you're feeling pain.



Biking



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What are the benefits of cycling for people with PN?

Since cycling is a low-impact, non-weight-bearing exercise, it is very beneficial for people with PN. It has been shown to slow degeneration and increase nerve regeneration. Best results are seen when cycling is done consistently (30 minutes daily, 5 days per week). However, when you are new to cycling, it is important to build up gradually (start at 5-20 minutes daily, 3 days per week). Gradually increase intensity going from low to moderate (you should still be able to easily maintain a conversation when cycling).

With a little preparation and correct choice of your itinerary, cycling is pure fun. It will improve your wellbeing and as such alleviate any physical ailments.

Sources

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<https://www.bicycling.com/culture/a40765241/cyclists-who-pay-it-forward-gregory-maassen/>

Any enquiries or need for personal coaching?

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