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Main Focus

## A Dreaded Symptom Picture

### Polyneuropathy and the Possibilities of Naturopathy

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#### **For those in a hurry**

Naturopathy can offer many starting points for polyneuropathy to alleviate symptoms, avoid side effects and increase well-being. In addition to input from Hildegard von Bingen, Dr. Schuessler and homeopathy, among others, you will also find mental considerations in this article.

Polyneuropathy is a dreaded symptom picture that is usually the result of other diseases. At the same time, problematic accompanying symptoms can appear. Although polyneuropathy is not yet curable, naturopathy can bring relief and well-being.

Polyneuropathy is a disease of the peripheral nervous system in which the nerve pathways are damaged and the conduction of stimuli is disturbed. The clinical picture can manifest itself in many ways. The frequency increases with age. On average, there is one affected person per 2,000 inhabitants. A nerve cell is composed of the cell body and the nerve process.

The processes are protected like power cables by a sheath, the myelin layer, and serve for optimal stimulus and signal transmission. According to these components of the nerve cells, a distinction can be made between the demyelinating and axonal forms. In the first manifestation, the myelin sheath becomes increasingly brittle and the transmission of information is inhibited. In axonal polyneuropathy, the axon itself is damaged, which is why there are worse prognoses here. Depending on the occurrence of polyneuropathy, a distinction can be made between symmetrical (on both sides), asymmetrical (unilateral), distal (arms/legs) or proximal (in the trunk area) variants.

### **Causes and Favorable Factors**

Polyneuropathy can originate due to a wide variety of diseases and can develop progressively. It would go beyond the scope of this article if we were to devote ourselves to the multitude in more detail, so I would like to mention these in overview in the main categories<sup>(1)</sup>.

#### **Metabolic level**

##### **Diabetes mellitus**

The so-called saccharification of the nerves can continuously damage their activity, sensitivity, motor skills and sensory function and is one of the most common causes.

##### **Renal failure**

Progressive renal insufficiency promotes the accumulation of toxins, which destroys nerve cells, tracts and protective layers.

##### **Liver**

An overload of this vital organ impairs metabolism and detoxification. This can be preceded by tumors, alcohol abuse and liver inflammation.

If the liver is overloaded, the metabolism and detoxification are impaired.

#### **Toxic Level**

Excessive alcohol consumption is one of the most common causes. Certain medications (some chemotherapeutic agents, antibiotics or antiepileptic drugs) and heavy metals (mercury, lead or arsenic) can also damage the nerves.

### **Level of Deficiency Symptoms:**

If valuable vitamins, micronutrients or amino acids are missing, polyneuropathy can also be triggered. Primarily deficiencies in B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>6</sub>, and B<sub>12</sub>, as well as folic acid and Vitamin E.

### **Level of Autoimmune and Inflammatory Diseases**

Guillain-Barré syndrome, lupus erythematosus, rheumatoid arthritis or fibromyalgia may be associated with polyneuropathy.

### **Infection Level**

Diseases such as Lyme disease, TBE, but also HIV/AIDS or infection-related hepatitis can trigger polyneuropathy.

Triggers for polyneuropathy can be Lyme disease and Tick-Borne Encephalitis (TBE).

### **Genetic Level**

Hereditary diseases such as Charcot-Marie-Tooth's disease can cause polyneuropathy due to its symptoms.

### **Symptoms and Sequelae**

In the case of polyneuropathy, the quality of life can be reduced to a greater or lesser extent.

The symptoms of polyneuropathy are strongly dependent on the severity of the diseases, the occurrence of nerve damage and the cause. Accordingly, the quality of life can be reduced to a greater or lesser extent. In combination with the underlying disease, psychological complaints such as depression, anxiety or overloading and/or exhaustion can also occur. In general, a distinction can be made between sensitivity, motor and autonomic disorders.

### **Sensitivity Manifestations**

- Numbness
- Paraesthesia such as tingling, burning, feelings of pressure/swelling or cotton wool
- Gait uncertainties
- Risk of injury and burns due to the reduced sensory stimulation message to the brain

### **Motor Manifestations**

- Muscle paralysis and spasms
- Muscular atrophy (shrinkage)
- Movement restrictions
- Decreased fine motor skills

### **Autonomic Manifestations**

- Intestinal complaints such as diarrhea or constipation
- Bladder problems such as urinary retention or incontinence
- Heart complaints such as arrhythmias
- Breathing difficulties

### **Naturopathic Approaches**

An interdisciplinary cooperation between orthodox medicine and naturopathic considerations would be very desirable for diseases such as polyneuropathy, as each discipline can contribute its best possibilities for the patients. The comprehensive diagnostic procedures of medicine can be an essential basis for naturopathic work. We take a differentiated look at this with different approaches.

### **Micronutrients**

#### **B Vitamins**

Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> in particular is essential for the nervous system, as it is involved in the formation of the myelin layer. But B<sub>1</sub> and B<sub>6</sub>, preferably in the form of a vitamin B complex, are also important for nerve health.

#### **Folic Acid**

Folic acid is in close resonance with B<sub>12</sub>. Specifically coordinated folic acid therapy after appropriate laboratory diagnostics can have a beneficial effect on neurological symptoms. In particular, patients with alcohol-related polyneuropathy have a folic acid deficiency. Medications such as antiepileptic drugs can cause polyneuropathies via a low folic acid level.

People with alcohol-related polyneuropathy often have a folic acid deficiency.

#### **Alpha-Lipoic Acid**

This coenzyme of many enzyme complexes and valuable antioxidants is involved in cellular energy metabolism and can be used positively in polyneuropathies.

### **Neutropic Nutrients**

Among other things, **Calcium EAP**, which is also known as the "membrane protection factor" and is the basic building block for the formation of phospholipids and thus the myelin layer, is worth mentioning. **Uridine monophosphate** (UMP), on the other hand, stimulates protein formation and helps to supply damaged neurons with sufficient enzymes. **Benfotiamine** is an inactive form of thiamine, which the body quickly breaks down into physiological vitamin B<sub>1</sub>. Decreased thiamine mainly affects the peripheral and central nervous system. In full deficiency, paralysis, hyperesthesia and reduced muscle tension can occur<sup>(2)</sup>.

### **Remedies of Hildegard von Bingen**

The following considerations of Hildegard Medicine may be relevant for the nervous system<sup>(3)</sup>.

#### **Nutmeg Cinnamon Cookies**

Trochisci Myristicae cp. are available as ready-made mixtures and should not be regarded as a treat. The recipe developed by Hildegard von Bingen is one of the universal remedies for the nervous system. In case of nerve and concentration weakness, for better cerebral blood circulation and stress elimination, the cookies can be eaten three to five times a day.

#### **Fennel Mixed Powder**

Pulvis Foeniculi cp. is a mixture as fennel seed, galangal, diptamwort and hawkweed powder and is considered a convalescent agent. 2-3 pinches should be taken half an hour after lunch in a liqueur glass of red wine.

#### **Yesterday's Extract**

Decoctum Fructus Hordei is indicated for muscle weakness and atrophy, head problems and physical exhaustion. On the one hand, a full bath is recommended, for which 1 kg of barley to 10 liter water is boiled and strained off. The extract is then mixed with the bath. On the other hand, half the amount can also be used for a regular scalp massage.

#### **Galangal**

Pulvis radix galangae is considered the universal remedy of Hildegard von Bingen and can additionally be used for symptoms of weakness, exhaustion, heart problems, anxiety and depression. The antispasmodic effect is also worth mentioning. Both the powder instead of pepper for seasoning and the galangal honey for direct consumption (only 1-2 pinches per intake), or the tablet one to three times a day (let it melt on the tongue), can be used.

### **Schuessler Salts**

The salts postulated by Dr. Schuessler can also contribute not only to calming but also to strengthening the nerves in patients with polyneuropathy. Among other things, it is worth mentioning, all are in the potency D6 for application<sup>(4)</sup>.

Schuessler salts can contribute to strengthening the nerves.

#### **No. 05 – Potassium phosphoricum**

As a nerve nutrient, it maintains the cellular membrane resting potential and is essential for the brain, nerves and muscles.

#### **No. 07 - Magnesium phosphoricum**

This salt plays a major role in the transmission of nerve impulses and contributes to restful sleep. Its physical occurrences are in brain, nerve and muscle cells as well as internal organs.

Magnesium phosphoricum (No. 7) plays a role in the transmission of nerve impulses.

#### **No. 21 - Zincum chloratum**

As a remedy of nerve metabolism, this salt should also have a relaxing, immune strengthening and connective tissue strengthening effect. It strengthens the nerve sheath and compensates for weaknesses of the nerve cells.

In case of pain, the following Schuessler salts can be combined: No. 03 in the potency D12, Magnesium phosphoricum in D6 and Zincum chloratum in D6. Ferrum phosphoricum (No. 03) is essential for the functions of the immune system and contributes to optimal oxygen uptake. Its role in blood formation and muscle health is central.

### **Medicinal Mushrooms**

Nowadays, with their diverse and fascinating ingredients for naturopathy, medicinal mushrooms have now become a permanent part in complementary medicine consideration. There are also some exciting agents for polyneuropathy that should be considered<sup>(5)</sup>.

#### **Heridium erimaceus**

On the one hand, Lion's mane is interesting as a reliever of nerve pain and strengthening power for the myelin layer. At the same time, it can help to compensate for nerve damage caused by inflammation. Due to its neuroprotective abilities, it can also push nerve growth factor (NGF).

#### **Reishi**

Ganoderma lucidum serves to balance the nervous system and can, among other things, be indicated for nerve complaints caused by autoimmune factors. Thanks to it, the supply of nutrients to the nerves can also be promoted. As an adaptogen, reishi can stimulate sleep, reduce stress and bring resilience.

### **Cordyceps sinensis**

Cordyceps is not only beneficial for the energy metabolism of the body's cells, but can also stimulate the supply of the peripheral nerves. The formation of ATP in the mitochondria and nerve regeneration are improved.

### **Homeopathy**

Homeopathic remedies should be chosen carefully and in intensive examination of the patient's medical history. Therefore, it would be short-sighted to simply name a few remedies here. In the following, certain homeopathic remedies will be explained in a broader context in relation to polyneuropathy<sup>(6)</sup>.

#### **Aconitum D6**

Anxiety, inner restlessness, unbearable pain, pale or pink skin, sudden shooting pain and emotional shock events can indicate Aconitum. Cold, draught and the evening hours worsen the symptoms, sweating improves them.

#### **Zincum metallicum D12**

Nerve pain, restlessness in the legs, weakness, trembling and exhaustion, coupled with stress, exertion and anger, are characteristics of Zincum metallicum. Cold and exertion intensify the symptoms, exercise and the evening improves the condition of people who need this remedy.

#### **Secale cornutum D6**

Severe pain with blue-white skin discoloration, tingling, burning, headache, muscle cramps and circulatory disorders can indicate this remedy.

#### **Espeletia D6**

If there are stabbing leg pains, feelings of cold and sensations such as pins and needles, Espeletia can be chosen. Characteristic indication symptoms can be rheumatic back pain, pressure on the chest and belching.

#### **Hypericum D6**

If nerve damage occurs as a result of metabolic diseases and numbness in the legs with a feeling of cold as well as electrocution-like pain appears, this remedy may be indicated. Hypericum has also proven effective for finger tingling, nerve and headache pains as well as drowsiness<sup>(6)</sup>.

Hypericum D6 can help with nerve damage as a result of metabolic diseases.

## Other Procedures

Since the consequences and accompanying symptoms of polyneuropathy can be very diverse, holistic well-being must always be kept in mind. In particular, the mental level and the energy system of the human being should be taken into account, as the nerve pathways are inextricably linked to them. Therefore, let's take a look at complementary procedures that can become valuable companions for those affected by polyneuropathy.

Treatment should also take into account the mental level and the energy system of the person.

## (Self-)Hypnosis

As a complementary method, hypnosis can also be a help in polyneuropathy through the use of certain ideas and formulations. Both in psychological imbalance as well as in pain and anxiety, it can be a valuable supplement in addition to conventional medical procedures. The targeted use of hypnosis is becoming increasingly important, especially in pain treatment, supported by studies in recent decades. Among other things, it is possible to imagine pain in the form of a shape and change it.

Patients with mental imbalance can benefit from hypnosis

The nerve pathways can also be visualized during hypnosis in order to strengthen the sheath or to let the transmission happen again in a more powerful rhythm. Conscious suggestions (deep-acting formulations), such as those used by autogenic training, can be applied specifically to the symptoms or the nervous system. Of course, one cannot expect miracles from hypnosis, but it is precisely the further work of the patients by means of self-hypnosis instructions that can substantially increase self-efficacy. This requires a form of hypnosis induction and discharge appropriate to the patient as well as an effective part in which the resources, anchors, ideas or formulations developed are applied themselves.

## Mindfulness

If the sensation of the sensitive nerves changes, among other things in the legs, their conscious control can be very important. However, this may be done calmly and with the necessary attention. Mindfulness exercises can help to retrain one's own sensitivity and shape perception. In addition to working with hedgehog balls that you roll under the soles of your feet or trying to walk on different surfaces, consciously feeling gemstone fascia rollers on your lower legs can also be



beneficial. In addition, water of different temperatures can train mindfulness. In the context of meditations, the entire leg can also be observed in perception: first in the area of the toes, then the back of the foot, the heel and the calf. Mindfulness takes time, but it can help the nerves to strengthen their sensitivity again.

### **Bioresonance**

Energetic measurement, diagnostics and test procedures are still greatly underestimated. Of course, they are not comparable to laboratory tests or imaging procedures, and they must never convey this claim. Nevertheless, they can be a useful support, especially in the case of accompanying symptoms of polyneuropathy. Bioresonance procedures, for example, can strengthen the energy system and relieve the subconscious. If there are factors that additionally challenge the nervous system, such as stress, fears about one's own condition or inner conflicts, bioresonance procedures can help to reduce them more easily.

In addition, the nervous system itself, the nerve cells, the information transmission, the spinal cord, the myelin sheath or the nerve conduction velocity can also be worked on by means of bioresonance. Of course, we cannot automatically speak of a cure here, but it may be possible to alleviate the symptoms or maintain the status quo for as long as possible in combination with other therapies.

### **Energy Process**

In general, I have had very good experiences with neurological diseases with energetic procedures such as Reiki, Japanese healing currents or quantum healing. But even those who offer Holistic Pulsing or Craniosacral Therapy know how beneficial these methods can be. Patients with neurological complaints usually react even more sensitively or perceive the energy supply in a more differentiated way. It is possible to work with all the energy in the legs as well as with the supply, so-called energy flows, in the body as a whole.

Philipp Feichtinger has had good experiences with energetic procedures such as Reiki or quantum healing.

Japanese healing currents, for example, assume that each side of the body is supplied by a caregiver current. This can be worked on both sides. Patients can then also perform the two simple handholds independently at home. For the left side, the right hand is placed on the left neck, the left hand under the left buttock. Then move the left hand to the left crook of the groin, the right remains in the neck. But the 26 "safety energy locks", which can be thought of as acupuncture points, can also be used. Worth mentioning for the base and leg energy is the SES 4 on the big toe, which can be held on both sides.

## The Author



**Phillip Feichtinger, HP** is a Heilpraktiker, a naturopathic and hypnosis therapist focused on holistic health. As a trained secondary school teacher (Austria), working with children is close to his heart. He is an Organetics (organic ethicist) practitioner, coach and author. He runs his own practice in Austria. As a lecturer and course instructor, he holds seminars and writes for various health magazines.

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