

Erin Billups: You may have already seen the commercials.

Sedric The Entertainer: If you have diabetes, burning, shooting pain in your feet or hands, step on up.

Erin Billups: Cedric the Entertainer says; watching his father suffer with diabetic neuropathy or nerve pain was no laughing matter. It's why he's joined the awareness campaign, launched by the American Diabetes Association in Pfizer, encouraging diabetics not to ignore the pain.

Sedric The Entertainer: The whole reason I got involved was, you know, the African-American Dad, you know, self-reliant, strong man, don't need anything, and so you started to see him not really enjoying the things that he used to do. He's a big outdoors guy, he'd love to, you know, cut his own grass, be in the garden.

Erin Billups: In a survey the step on up campaign found that 79% of diabetics were dealing with nerve pain and not connecting it to diabetes. Blacks and Latinos are disproportionately going undiagnosed.

Sedric The Entertainer: Don't suffer in silence. Don't think you can figure it out on your own.

Erin Billups: Dr. Minisha Sood heads-up inpatient diabetes care at Lenox Hill Hospital says it's a common story. The pain is often missed in the litany of issues doctors must go over with their diabetic patients. She explains the pain is the result of high blood sugar attacking proteins in the body.

Dr. Sood: Those proteins change and those proteins become inflammatory.

Erin Billups: Causing nerve damage. She says, the symptoms only get worse if left unaddressed. Those who's high blood sugar, pressure, weight, and cholesterol are not under control are at greater risk for nerve pain and other consequences.

Dr. Sood: Diabetic nerve pain starts out as something very mild, can progress, and once you hit the numbness stage; they really can't feel their feet.

Erin Billups: Which could lead to injury, infection, and even amputation. The good news is, the nerve damage can be reversed if caught early.

Dr. Sood: And for patients with diabetes who don't yet have nerve pain; prevention is critical.

Erin Billups: For more information, visit ny1.com. Erin Billups, NY1.