

11. Being unable to flex the ankle or toes



What it means: An inability to flex the toes or ankle upwards is known as "foot drop" or "drop foot" and signals nerve or muscle damage that can originate well north of your feet -- as far as your back or even shoulder or neck. Certain chemotherapy drugs can also cause trouble lifting the front part of the foot while walking or standing.

More clues: There may be pain and numbness as well, though not necessarily. Sometimes the pain is felt in the upper leg or lower spine, where a nerve is pinched (by damage or a tumor). In many cases, the foot drags when the person walks, sometimes causing him or her to have to hike up the knee and hip with each step. It's rare for both feet to be affected.

What to do: Report this serious symptom to your doctor. Foot drop can be completely reversible or permanent, depending on its cause and treatment. Wearing a brace to keep the foot from flopping is often recommended, in order to prevent back and hip pain caused by hiking up a floppy foot.