

# Nerve Compression

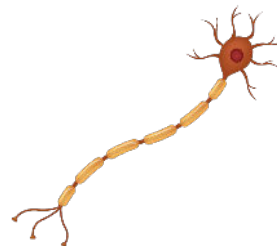


## HEALTHY NERVE

### WHAT IS A NERVE?

Peripheral nerves carry messages between the body and the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord). They act like wires carrying messages that direct movement (motor nerves) or signals to the brain describing the body is experiencing (sensory nerves).

Nerves outside of the brain or spinal cord are susceptible to injuries that can block their ability to send and receive these key messages.



## NERVE INJURY

### NERVES ARE INJURED IN THREE COMMON WAYS

#### Cut/Transection

Nerves can be cut during minor events such as a kitchen knife injuries or traumatic events resulting in fractures and other injuries.

#### Compression/Crushed

Compression can be caused by swelling from traumatic injuries or from over-use during everyday tasks such as working at a computer.

#### Stretched

If a joint is pulled beyond its normal range of function (during a dislocation, for example) the nerves in that area can be stretched causing damage.

When nerves are injured people often lose the ability to move a body part, report a tingling sensation, or have chronic pain. Nerves can become compressed when muscle, tendon, or local swelling presses on the nerve. This pressure can stop nerves from properly sending signals. While a compressed nerve can happen anywhere, compression in the upper extremity or arm, often happens in the arm at the elbow or wrist.

## TWO COMMON COMPRESSIONS

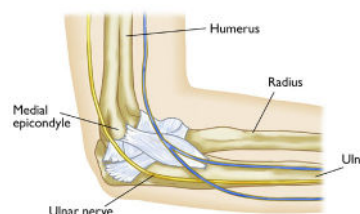


### Compression in the wrist (Carpal Tunnel)

Similar to the ulnar nerve, the median nerve that passes through the wrist can become compressed on the way to the hand. This compression can cause tingling or impaired of the thumb to the third finger (shaded in blue at left).

### Compression in the elbow (Cubital Tunnel)

The ulnar nerve can become compressed as it passes through the elbow on the way to the hand. This compression can cause tingling or impaired movement in the ring and little finger of the hand.



# Nerve Compression



## CAUSES OF COMPRESSION

### THINGS TO AVOID

Repetitive motion such as:

- Keeping the elbow bent for long periods or repeatedly bending your elbow
- Leaning on your elbow for long periods of time can put pressure on the nerve
- Working on a computer or holding a mobile phone

Other possible cause of compression include:

- Arthritis
- Inflammatory joint disease
- Previous injuries of the elbow such as fractures or dislocations of the elbow

## NERVE COMPRESSION

### RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS

- ✓ Tingling or numbness in hand or fingers
- ✓ Weakness and clumsiness of fingers
- ✓ Pain and numbness that wakes you in the night
- ✓ Aching pain or electric shock-like feeling in the hand.

## IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE A NERVE COMPRESSION

It may be possible to treat your compressed nerve without surgery depending on the location or the severity. Non-surgical treatment could include:

- Stretching exercises
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory such as aspirin,
- Splinting or bracing of the elbow or wrist

If the compression is more serious, then surgery may be required to ease the pressure on the nerve and restore function.



## FINDING HELP



If you think you may have a compressed nerve, consult your health care provider.

If you need to find a nerve specialist for help, visit our directory at: <https://globalnervefoundation.org/gnf-directory/>

Contact us  
[contact@globalnervefoundation.org](mailto:contact@globalnervefoundation.org)

