

OS21lite Ulnar Nerve Release

This document will give you information about ulnar nerve release. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is ulnar nerve compression?

The ulnar nerve goes round the back of the inner side of your elbow (sometimes called your 'funny bone'). It then goes through a tight tunnel between the forearm muscles (see figure 1). Ulnar nerve compression (also called cubital tunnel syndrome) is a condition where there is increased pressure on the ulnar nerve, usually resulting in numbness in your ring and little fingers.

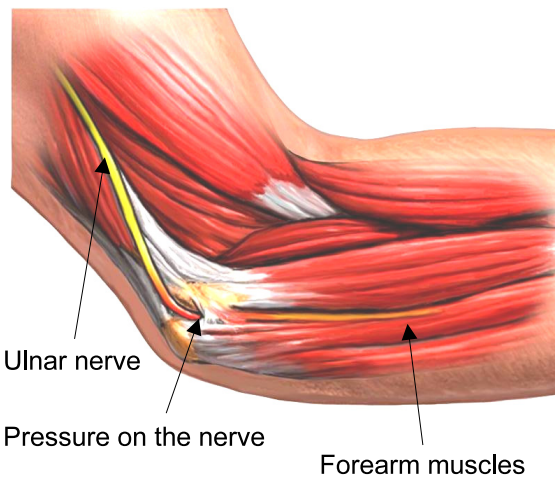


Figure 1
Ulnar nerve compression

What are the benefits of surgery?

Surgery helps to prevent further damage to the nerve. If you have the operation early enough, the numbness in your hand may get better.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

If your symptoms are mild and happen mostly at night, a splint to hold your elbow straight while you are in bed often helps. In many cases, it is best to have an operation to release the nerve to prevent permanent nerve damage.

What does the operation involve?

A variety of anaesthetic techniques are possible. The operation usually takes between half an hour and three-quarters of an hour.

Your surgeon will make a cut over the back of your elbow on the inner side. They will cut any tight tissue that is compressing the nerve.

Sometimes your surgeon will need to remove a piece of bone, or move the nerve so that it lies in front of the elbow.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications of any operation

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Unsightly scarring

2 Specific complications of this operation

- Continued numbness in your ring and little fingers
- Return of numbness
- Numbness in a patch of skin just below the tip of your elbow.
- Severe pain, stiffness and loss of use of the arm (Complex Regional Pain Syndrome)

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day.

You should keep your arm lifted up for the first couple of days. It is important to gently exercise your fingers, elbow and shoulder to prevent stiffness.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, you should ask a member of the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Your symptoms may continue to improve for up to six months.

Summary

Ulnar nerve compression causes numbness in your ring and little fingers. An ulnar nerve release may improve your symptoms and should prevent permanent nerve damage.

Further information

- NHS smoking helpline on 0800 022 4332 and at www.smokefree.nhs.uk
- www.eatwell.gov.uk – for advice on maintaining a healthy weight
- www.eidoactive.co.uk – for information on how exercise can help you
- www.aboutmyhealth.org – for support and information you can trust
- Internet Society of Orthopaedic Surgery and Trauma at www.orthogate.org
- Arthritis Research Campaign on 0870 850 500 and at www.arc.org.uk
- Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome Association at www.rsds.org
- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons at www.aaos.org
- www.eatonhand.com
- NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 (0845 606 46 47 – textphone)

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