

OS21lite Ulnar Nerve Release

Expires end of December 2019

A more detailed version of this procedure specific information sheet is available. Please ask your health practitioner at Joondalup Health Campus for a copy.

Write questions or notes here:



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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 and through a tight tunnel between the forearm muscles (see figure 1). Ulnar nerve compression happens when there is increased pressure on the ulnar nerve, usually resulting in numbness in your ring and little fingers.

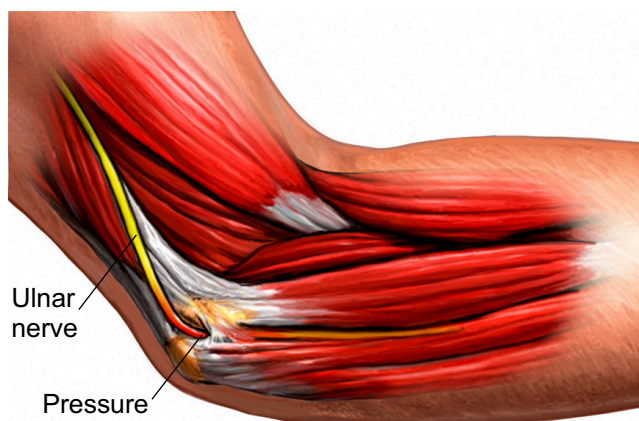


Figure 1
Ulnar nerve compression

What are the benefits of surgery?

The aim is 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. For many people it is best to have an operation to release the nerve to prevent permanent nerve damage.

What does the operation involve?

Various anaesthetic techniques are possible. The operation usually takes 30 to 45 minutes. Your surgeon will make a cut over the back of the inner side of your elbow. They will cut any tight tissue that is compressing the nerve. Your surgeon may need to remove a piece of bone or move the nerve.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

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

2 Specific complications

- Continued numbness in your ring and little fingers
- Return of numbness
- Numbness in a patch of skin just below the tip of your elbow
- Tenderness of the scar
- 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 may need to rest your arm in a sling for a few 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, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Your symptoms may continue to improve for up to 18 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.

Acknowledgements

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