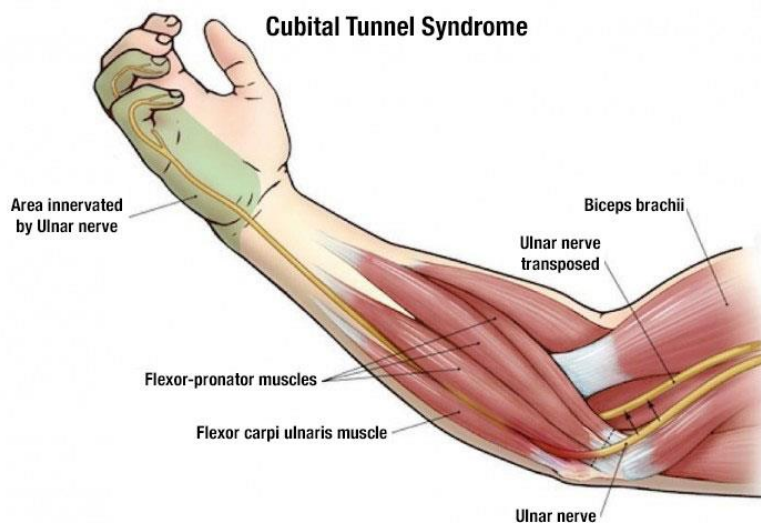


Ulnar neuropathy

What is ulnar neuropathy?

Ulnar neuropathy is the irritation or compression of the ulnar nerve, usually in the cubital tunnel at the elbow, or occasionally at the wrist. This may cause tingling, numbness, pain and sometimes weakness in your hand.

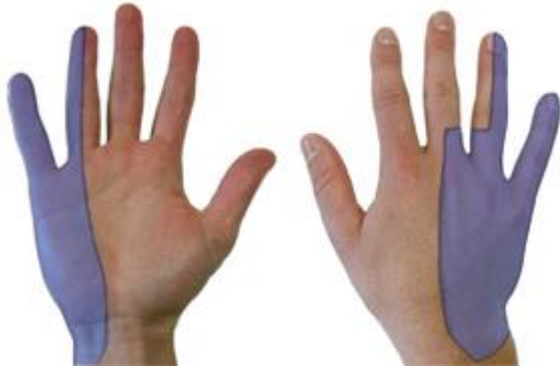


What is the cause of ulnar neuropathy?

Symptoms occur when the nerve becomes irritated by pressure within the tunnel. The reason is usually unknown, but possible causes can include swelling of the tendons on the inner aspect of the elbow, arthritis, fracture or joint dislocation. The symptoms are usually made worse by keeping the elbow in a bent position for long periods of time.

What are the symptoms?

Ulnar neuropathy typically causes tingling, numbness and pain in the little and ring fingers and can cause weakness in the small muscles of the hand. If there is weakness you may notice difficulty pinching tightly, straightening the fingers completely or in extreme cases a claw deformity in the little and ring fingers.



What should I do?

Mild symptoms can be managed by avoiding aggravating positions such as a bent elbow particularly at night. This can be done by wearing a splint or wrapping a towel around your arm to stop the elbow from bending too much. Other things that may help are wearing a headset when using the telephone and avoid leaning on the inside of the elbows.

How long will it take to get better?

This can vary depending on the cause of the neuropathy. In mild to moderate cases avoiding the aggravating positions or wearing a splint can resolve the symptoms quickly. If the symptoms fail to improve or become more severe then surgery may be considered.

What if I don't get better?

If your symptoms persist you may be referred to our orthopaedic assessment service for further help and a possible surgical referral. You may be referred for nerve conduction studies where small metal wires called electrodes are placed on your skin to stimulate your nerves. The speed and strength of the nerve signal is measured at the affected area providing information about the severity of compression.

Surgically a small operation may be required to release the ulnar nerve at the site of compression. There are several ways this can be done and your surgeon can advise you which technique is most appropriate for your problem.

Further information

https://www.bssh.ac.uk/patients/conditions/22/cubital_tunnel_syndrome