



Peripheral Nerve Surgery

A guide for patients

A peripheral nerve is any nerve that is outside the brain and spinal cord. Peripheral nerves course through all parts of the body, supplying muscles and other organs. If a peripheral nerve becomes damaged and does not heal well, surgery may be the only treatment option with a good chance of restoring some or all of the nerve's function.

The most common causes of damage to a peripheral nerve are:

entrapment and compression – When a peripheral nerve runs through a very narrow area, it may become trapped and compressed.

If the nerve is compressed for some time, it can become irritable and inflamed. This causes chronic pain, numbness, tingling and poor muscle strength. If the compression and inflam-

mation worsen, the area can lose sensation and muscle strength.

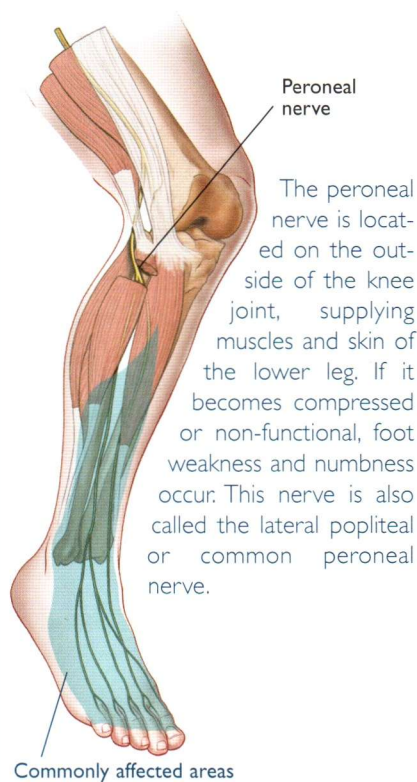
In severe cases, the compression can prevent adequate blood supply to the nerve, which may start to die unless the compression is relieved.

acute trauma – Typical examples are a stretch injury (usually to a limb, shoulder or the neck), a laceration due to a knife or other sharp object, or a missile wound.

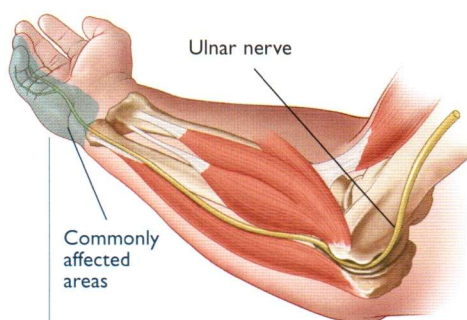
tumour – Whether a tumour is benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous), it can cause serious damage to a peripheral nerve.

Common surgical procedures to restore nerve function include neurolysis, nerve transposition, nerve repair, neuroma resection, and nerve graft, as described on page three.

PERONEAL NERVE SYNDROME

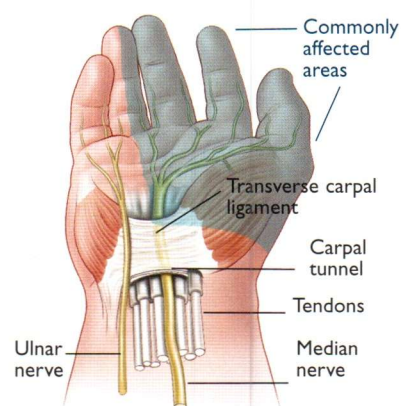


CUBITAL TUNNEL SYNDROME



The ulnar nerve is vulnerable to compression where it passes behind the elbow. This is the same nerve that is aggravated when you strike your "funny bone". Compression of the ulnar nerve can cause hand pain (particularly in the ring and little fingers) and general weakness of the hand. In serious cases, the forearm is weakened. Surgery usually involves freeing the nerve from compression and/or moving (transposing) it.

CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME



The carpal tunnel is a narrow passage through which the median nerve and nine tendons pass. Carpal tunnel syndrome occurs when the contents of the tunnel swell, or the ligament forming the roof of the tunnel thickens to compress the median nerve.

This syndrome is common, occurring most often in women and frequently aggravated by pregnancy. Repetitive activities that stress the hand and wrist may worsen the condition (although this has been a matter of debate). The objective of surgery is to open the carpal tunnel and relieve pressure on the median nerve.

Common symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome include:

- tingling and numbness of the thumb, index finger, middle and ring finger, especially at night
- pain running up the arm and shoulder
- pain when gripping
- a tendency to drop objects
- decrease in hand-motor skills.

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TREATMENT INFORMATION PAMPHLET

PROCEDURE: _____

PATIENT'S NAME: _____

DOCTOR'S NAME: _____

EDITION NUMBER: _____ DATE: DD / MM / YYYY

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