

What is ulnar nerve compression?

This is a condition that causes numbness of the little and ring fingers. The ulnar nerve is one of the main nerves to the hand and travels round the back of your elbow, often referred to as the “funny bone”.

Ulnar nerve compression is a condition where there is increased pressure or irritation of this nerve, which produces the symptoms and these are often worse if you keep your elbow bent for some time.

Treatment options

If the symptoms are mild, then wearing a splint worn at night to keep your elbow straight might help.

If this is not successful or if the symptoms are severe then surgery is recommended to prevent permanent damage to the nerve.

Benefits of surgery

An operation will help prevent further damage to the affected nerve. You may find that the numbness in your hand will improve, but this will depend on how long you have had ulnar nerve compression.

Pre Operation Tests

Depending on their assessment, the doctor may send a person with ulnar nerve entrapment symptoms for other tests, including:
X-rays to check the elbow for bone spurs, fractures, or any other issues that may cause compression.

Nerve conduction studies, where small needles are inserted into the muscles surrounding the ulnar nerve, to check muscle function and see how well the ulnar nerve is functioning.

About the operation

This operation is usually performed as a day case so you can go home the same day as your operation.

The operation is performed under local block, this is when the arm is made numb with an anaesthetic for the procedure to be carried out (awake)

A cut is made over the back of the elbow on the inner side. Any tight tissue that is compressing the nerve is then cut. The cut is then closed with stitches or clips.

Complications of ulnar release surgery

Reported complications may include-

- Infection
- Post-operative bleeding
- Nerve irritation.

After the operation

You can help prevent further ulnar entrapment at home by doing the following:

Avoiding any activity that causes the elbow to bend and straighten repeatedly.

Making sure they are sitting at a proper height when using a computer to allow the arm to straighten.

Keeping the elbow straight at night.

Avoiding leaning on the elbow or putting pressure on the inner aspect of the elbow.

With active prevention and home treatment, most people can avoid ulnar nerve entrapment.

When can I return to work?

This will depend on the type of work you do. If you have a job involving arm movements close to your body you may be able to return within 3 weeks. Most people return within a month of the operation but if you have a heavy lifting job or one with sustained overhead

arm movement you may require a longer period of rehabilitation. Please discuss this further with the doctors or physiotherapist if you feel unsure.

When can I return to sports?

You will be able to return to normal sporting activity usually between 8-12 weeks after your operation.

Will I need to wear a Sling

You will need to wear a sling for a few days after the operation while getting over the operation pain. However, resting the elbow for more than a few days (3 or 4) is not helpful and can lead to stiffness.

When can I return to driving?

You can drive as soon as you feel able to comfortably control the vehicle when you are not wearing a sling. This is normally about 2 weeks. It is advisable to start with short journeys.

What should I do if I have a problem?

If you experience severe pain, excessive swelling, inflammation or discharge please report it to your GP. If you cannot contact your GP you should contact UTC.



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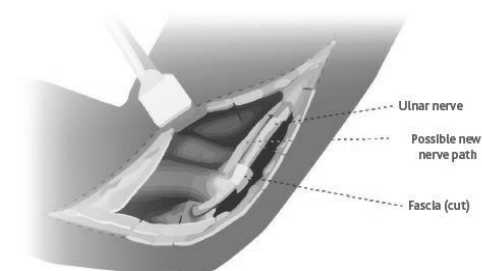
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Ulnar Nerve Release Information Leaflet



Bringing Healthcare Closer to Home

Community Surgical Scheme



Telephone: (01507) 631297

Mon - Fri

Between 09:00 and 17:00