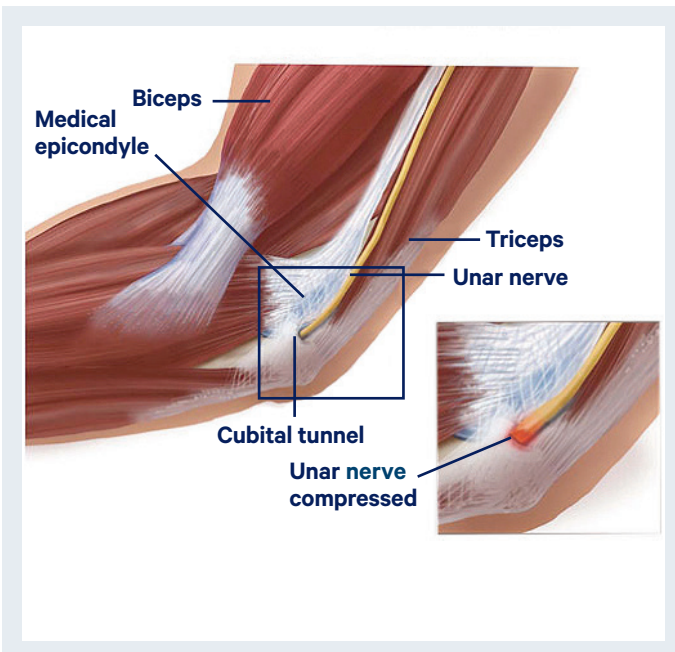


Cubital Tunnel Syndrome

WHAT IS CUBITAL TUNNEL SYNDROME AND HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

Cubital tunnel syndrome is caused by pressure on the ulnar nerve as it goes through a tunnel on the inside of your elbow. The ulnar nerve begins at the spinal cord and travels down the inside of your arm. The nerve gives feeling to the skin and movement to the muscles in this area. Cubital tunnel syndrome is a common problem. Pressure or stretching of the nerve can reduce the flow of blood to the nerve causing symptoms.



Cubital tunnel syndrome can be caused by repetitive and forceful bending of the elbow (such as pulling levers), reaching and lifting, elbow injuries or fractures, diabetes, arthritis of the elbow, a lump known as a cyst or ganglion. It most commonly occurs in people over the age of 40.

When this nerve has pressure on it you may experience tingling, pins and needles and or numbness in the little and ring fingers of your hand. In more severe cases you may start to notice that your hand feels weak and clumsy.

Your symptoms can be made worse by:

- Sleeping with your elbow fully bent.
- Leaning on your elbow while sitting at a table or desk.
- Holding your elbow bent for long periods, such as holding your phone to your ear.

HOW IS CUBITAL TUNNEL SYNDROME TREATED?

Hand Therapy

Your hand therapist will assess your elbow and treatment may include

- An elbow support that prevents the elbow bending fully at night while you are sleeping.
- Advice about how to avoid or change activities that brings on your symptoms.
- Exercises to help the nerve glide within the tunnel.
- Strengthening exercises.
- Suggesting you talk to your doctor about getting some medications to help reduce swelling in the tunnel.



Surgery

If your symptoms do not get better your hand therapist may refer you to a surgeon who will assess your elbow and decide if you need an operation. The aim of the operation is to reduce the pressure on the nerve where it passes through the tunnel at the elbow. This can involve releasing the nerve by cutting open the tunnel the nerve travels in or moving the nerve to the front of the elbow. Your surgeon will tell you about the type of operation you will need.

After the operation your hand therapist will show you how to manage your scar and guide your rehabilitation.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM MY REHABILITATION?

You should see an improvement in your symptoms in 4-6 weeks with Hand Therapy. If you have had your symptoms a long time it could take up to six months.

If you have had surgery the rehabilitation depends on the type of operation you have had. Your hand therapist can tell you more about this.



Cubital Tunnel Syndrome

Do

- Remember to wear your elbow support at night.
- Avoid the activities that bring on your symptoms.
- Rest your arm between activities, especially if you are doing anything heavy or repetitive.

Do Not

- Lean on the elbow when you are sitting at the table or at your desk.
- Hold your elbow bent for long periods for example holding your phone to your ear.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?

- Look out for activity that causes pain, swelling or numbness in your hand and arm, try to avoid it, and tell your hand therapist.
- If your splint is uncomfortable or rubbing book an appointment to see your hand therapist.
- If things are getting worse book an appointment to see your hand therapist.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I DO NOT HAVE TREATMENT?

If the nerve continues to have pressure on it the feeling in your hand will get worse. The muscles in your hand may become weak. This will affect you in everyday tasks. If you do not get treatment the nerve may become permanently damaged.

CONTACT DETAILS AND REFERENCES

Your hand therapist is _____

Merivale Hand Clinic (03) 3559775

www.ouh.nhs.uk/patient-guide/leaflets/library.aspx

<http://www.moveforwardpt.com/symptomsconditionsdetail.aspx?cid=1533497e-63fd-401c-84ac-a87b9baa633f>

Raleigh Hand Centre Wake Forest Rd, North Carolina