

CUBITAL TUNNEL SYNDROME : compression of the ulnar nerve as it passes through the cubital tunnel at the elbow, often called the “funny bone” area. Symptoms typically involve tingling, pain or numbness in the region of the elbow, soreness along the forearm down to the little finger side of hand. Click on this link to view the path of the ulnar nerve from the neck to the hand. <http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/figures/A00069F01.jpg>

At LoHi Catalyst Therapies, our certified hand therapist/occupational therapist and physical therapists are trained to identify and treat nerve compression conditions.

The key is early intervention! If left untreated, symptoms can quickly change from occasional to constant and be detrimental to function in both pain exacerbation and in resultant motor weakness.

Some Causes and aggravating activities: Cubital tunnel syndrome can often occur together with overuse of flexor muscles of the wrist and hand and prolonged bent elbow positioning. A few examples of activities that can cause problems to the ulnar nerve include:

- Trauma to the elbow, inflammation and nerve compression
- Prolonged typing with elbows bent more than 90 degrees along with wrists bent outward on the keyboard.
- Prolonged neck, shoulder, elbow tightening with phone use (including cell phones).
- Elbow bent tight tucking arm close in to your body when sleeping
- Prolonged elbow bent with daily carry of items such as purse/bag/mug/water bottle
- Repeated forceful gripping

What to do: Most importantly, identify the aggravating activity to better establish ways to help your nerve heal and reduce your symptoms. An occupational or physical therapist can assist you in this process.

Three things you can do:

1. Take frequent breaks for your computer keyboard. Move your hands and arms into the complete opposite position of the keyboard for 5 seconds.
If you do a significant amount of typing, in particular with a lap top computer; try this activity in completion or just do the first two but try this every time you feel *any* symptom:
 - lift up hands from keyboard, stretch fingers and thumb away from your palm (wide)
 - turn palms outward, straighten elbows, stretch front of chest
 - reach fingertips toward ceiling and rotate arm as if you are removing a light bulb
2. Sleep Positioning: Adjust it.
 - Sleep with your elbow almost straight and hands open. Wrapping a towel loosely around your elbow to hand can help keep it in a more open position.
 - Use a thin pillow under your side, one or two pillows to hold your arm up, leg and extra head support if needed.
3. Stretches: hands open wide, palms flat and facing away from you, elbows straight, and gentle neck stretches, “look to side, then look down/up slowly 3 times” and include 3 big breaths.

We recommend all of the above and we strongly recommend you ask a professional for suggestions. You can contact us directly by phone or email or contact your primary care physician. It is always good to learn what measures you can do to help yourself and to get professional advice.

Your hands are critical for function; we want to help you care for them.

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