

Compressive Neuropathies Causing Tingling, Numbness and Weakness July, 2022

By: Dr. Derek Conte

Many people come to my office very discouraged and miserable with intense pain, complaining of numbness, tingling, and weakness resulting from compression of various nerves in the chest, arms, hands, buttocks, legs and feet. The cause can be elusive and so people are often told there's nothing wrong with them. One female patient of mine was told her problem was emotional and psychotherapy was suggested. When we gave her our examination and explained there were physical reasons for her unrelenting pain, she wept with relief and got relief from her pain.

The fact is that nerves can be compressed in many ways and in many locations along their paths from the brain to their terminus in the far extremities with no direct spinal involvement. Known as "compressive neuropathies", they can be differentiated by the terms: carpal tunnel, tarsal tunnel, thoracic outlet and piriformis syndromes, each with specific causes and symptoms requiring careful examination and good knowledge of anatomy to properly diagnose.

To understand the nature of the problem, imagine yourself running through the jungle. The trees and vines and grass are thick, providing only very narrow openings through which to pass. The path is twisted and irregular with several particularly challenging obstacles along the way. You encounter swamps, boulders and giant fallen trees. If you're not careful you can get caught up. Nerves in the body face their own challenges as they move information about pain, touch, temperature, vibration and muscle movement back and forth between the body parts and the brain. The entire path may run three to six feet through a long maze of hazards such as muscles, bones, joints, ribs and discs which can pinch and squeeze, producing these symptoms and, in the worst cases, even loss of circulation and atrophy. In fact, the nerves of your fingers must pass no fewer than nine obstacles on their way to the brain and nine on their way back to the fingers. In the leg there are at least six obstacles going each way.

Remember that compression of nerves can occur in many places and affect different parts of the body. The key to dealing with these problems is discovering exactly which structure is causing the compression and correcting it. With the correct assessment and care the patient enjoys excellent results.

Dr. Derek Conte is co-founder of Chiropractic Specialists 1154 Concord Road in Smyrna. For questions, call: 404-784-6008. For more articles and photos, please visit: drderekconte.com