

Ulnar Neuropathy

Explanation of Diagnosis

Ulnar neuropathy occurs when the **ulnar nerve** (which runs along the inner elbow and controls sensation in the ring and pinky fingers) becomes **compressed or irritated**. This commonly happens at the **cubital tunnel (inside of the elbow)** or **Guyon's canal (wrist area)**. Symptoms include **numbness, tingling, weakness, and pain in the forearm, hand, and fingers**. It often worsens with **prolonged elbow bending, resting the elbow on hard surfaces, or repetitive gripping**.

Specific Work Modifications

- **Avoid prolonged elbow flexion (bending the elbow more than 90°)** while typing, using tools, or holding a phone.
- **Modify workstation setup** by using an **ergonomic keyboard and mouse** to reduce nerve compression.
- **Use a headset** instead of holding a phone.
- **Avoid resting the elbow on hard surfaces** (use padding or elbow pad from Amazon).
- **Take frequent breaks** to straighten and stretch the arm.

Specific Activity Modifications

- **Avoid** prolonged elbow bending (e.g., cycling, playing an instrument, knitting, or gaming for extended periods).
- **Sleep with your arm straight** by wrapping a towel around your elbow or a pillow to prevent bending it.
- **Modify grip-intensive activities** (e.g., weightlifting, golf, or racquet sports) by using **ergonomic grips and lighter resistance**.
- **Use an elbow brace or wrap** for support during activities.
- **Take frequent breaks** and perform **nerve-gliding exercises** to prevent stiffness.

Recommended Supplements

- **Vitamin B6 100 mg daily** - Supports nerve health.
- **Alpha-lipoic acid (600 mg daily)** - May help with nerve regeneration.
- **Magnesium (300-400 mg daily)** - Helps with muscle relaxation and nerve recovery.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids (1000 mg daily)** - Reduces nerve inflammation.
- **Turmeric (500 mg twice daily)** - Provides anti-inflammatory benefits.

Recommended Nutrition and Hydration

Diet Recommendations:

- **Nerve-supporting foods:** Avocados, eggs, dark chocolate, almonds, and whole grains (rich in B vitamins and healthy fats).
- **Anti-inflammatory foods:** Leafy greens, berries, fatty fish (salmon), and turmeric.
- **Limit processed foods, excessive sugar, and alcohol**, which can worsen nerve inflammation.

Hydration Tips:

- **Drink 2-3 liters of water daily** to maintain nerve function.
- **Limit caffeine and alcohol**, which can dehydrate tissues and slow healing.

Home Exercise Prescription

Perform **2-3 times daily** to relieve pressure on the ulnar nerve and improve mobility:

1. Ulnar Nerve Glide (Nerve Flossing)

- Start with your arm at your side, palm facing forward.
- Bend the elbow while extending the wrist and fingers (as if holding a tray).
- Slowly straighten your arm while bending the wrist down.
- **Repeat 10 times per session, 2-3 times daily.**

2. Elbow Extension Stretch

- Fully straighten your arm and hold the position to gently stretch the nerve.
- **Hold for 20-30 seconds, repeat 3 times.**

3. Wrist Flexor & Extensor Stretch

- Extend the arm, palm up, and gently pull back on the fingers with the opposite hand.
- **Hold for 20-30 seconds, repeat 3 times.**

4. Grip Strength Exercise (if weakness is present)

- Squeeze a **soft stress ball** gently for **5 seconds**.
- **Repeat 10-15 reps, 2 times daily.**

5. Isometric Wrist Extension

- Press your hand against a table without moving the wrist.
- **Hold for 5 seconds, 10 reps.**

Avoid prolonged elbow flexion, repetitive gripping, or direct pressure on the elbow until symptoms improve.

Helpful Books

1. "Why Do I Hurt? A Patient's Guide to Overcoming Chronic Pain" - Adriaan Louw

2. *"The Pain-Free Program: A Proven Method to Relieve Back, Neck, Shoulder, and Joint Pain"* - Anthony Carey

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Contact a Key West orthopedic clinic or reach out to Dr. Jason Pirozzolo.