

The Wellness Express™

Jump on the train to good health

Issue 3, October 2012

On Pins & Needles

Presented by:

Introduction

Tingling in your hands, feet, or both is a temporary problem that may be caused by sustained pressure on one or more of your nerves (from lying on your bent arm, for example) or, if it persists, other more serious underlying factors. Extremity tingling that is not associated with sustained nerve pressure is usually classified as chronic, severe, or episodic. In some cases, pain, numbness, itching, and muscle wasting may accompany extremity tingling - a situation usually indicative of some degree of nerve damage.

Traumatic injuries, infections, repetitive stress injuries, and certain diseases, such as diabetes, are all possible causes of nerve damage and extremity tingling. This nerve damage is called peripheral neuropathy, and it is common. The United Kingdom's National Health Service states that about 1 in 50 people in England have peripheral neuropathy.¹ Your chiropractor can assess your extremity tingling and make helpful treatment recommendations based on your unique situation.

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Common Causes of Extremity Tingling



Diabetes: Diabetes is a leading cause of peripheral neuropathy and extremity tingling. Diabetes mellitus is characterized by elevated blood glucose levels, and prolonged exposure to high blood glucose causes nerve damage. Tingling and other symptoms usually arise in diabetics' feet and ascend the legs, eventually affecting the hands and arms, too. According to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, approximately 60 to 70 percent of diabetics experience mild to severe forms of nerve damage.² A 2006 study published in the journal *Annals of Family Medicine* notes that a significant number of adults with undiagnosed diabetes show signs of peripheral nerve damage.³

Exercise of the Week

Oblique Twist in a Reverse Bridge Position

Start: Lie on your back on the ball in the Reverse Bridge position as shown. Hands are directly over the chest, palms together, arms straight.

Exercise: Twist the upper body to one side, so that arms finish parallel to the floor, and your upper body is resting on one shoulder. Try to keep your hips as stable as possible. Pause, then return to starting position. Repeat 8-10 times per side, alternating with each repetition.



Nerve Entrapment Syndromes:

Peripheral nerves (the nerves outside your spinal cord) running to your extremities may become entrapped (compressed or irritated) as they travel through certain parts of your body, which causes tingling and other symptoms in your affected extremity. Common locations for nerve entrapment syndromes in the upper body include your shoulder and collar bone (thoracic outlet syndrome), your elbow (cubital tunnel syndrome), and your wrist (carpal tunnel syndrome). In your lower body, you may experience nerve entrapment at your ankle (tarsal tunnel syndrome) that causes foot tingling and other symptoms. Nerve entrapment syndromes often respond to conservative treatments, including chiropractic care.

Alcoholism: Excessive alcohol consumption over a prolonged period may cause nerve damage throughout your body, especially your hands, fingers, feet, and toes - a condition called alcoholic neuropathy. Extremity numbness and tingling, pain, and muscle weakness are among the most common symptoms of alcohol-related nerve damage. The precise cause of alcoholic neuropathy is not always known, though alcohol's toxicity on the nerves and the poor nutrition that often accompanies alcoholism likely are causative factors. A 2003 study published in the journal *Annals of Neurology* states that ethanol's direct toxic effect (or the toxic effect of its metabolites) alone can cause alcoholic neuropathy.⁴ Treating the underlying alcohol problem is an essential part of a comprehensive alcoholic neuropathy treatment plan.

How Chiropractic Can Help



Your chiropractor is trained to assess the underlying causes of your extremity tingling and give you the care you need to resolve or manage this bothersome symptom. If your extremity tingling is caused by diabetes or alcoholism, your chiropractor can counsel you on healthy lifestyle habits to minimize further nerve damage and provide you with resources to assist your healing. If your extremity tingling is mild and unaccompanied by major loss of extremity functioning or lifestyle, your chiropractor may treat your problem using conservative therapies, such as joint manipulation, myofascial release, trigger point therapy, massage, stretching and strengthening exercises, activity modification, and certain physical therapy modalities.

It is important for you to seek prompt evaluation from your chiropractor for any persistent extremity tingling. You are less likely to suffer long-term consequences if your chiropractor can identify the underlying cause of your problem in a timely fashion. If your extremity tingling is caused by musculoskeletal problems (such as an entrapped nerve), appropriate chiropractic care can resolve your complaint and significantly reduce the likelihood of a recurrence.

Quote to Inspire

“An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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4. Koike H, Iijima M, Sugiura M, Mori K, Hattori N, Ito H, Hirayama M, Sobue G. Alcoholic neuropathy is clinicopathologically distinct from thiamine-deficiency neuropathy. *Annals of Neurology*. 2003. Jul; 54(1): 19-29.

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