

ASK YOUR PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Why Do I Have Pain and Numbness In My Arm and Hand ?

Have you ever had pain and or numbness in your chest, armpit, arm or hand? Has this pain kept you from performing your job, sleeping, playing with your kids/grandkids, or enjoying life? If so, don't worry....you're NOT alone! Often, pain/numbness in the arm and hand is a result of something gone awry at your neck even if you have no neck pain.

So how can I have pain/numbness in the arm and hand and none in the neck, yet the pain is coming from the neck? This does seem odd that the area that causes the pain is not actually painful, that is, until you understand why/how this happens. As most are aware, your spinal cord is attached to your brain and runs down the middle of your back protected by bony segments. Off the spinal cord to the left and right come nerves that run down the arms and hands and supply the muscles that control each as well as the ability to detect sensations. When there is pressure on the central spinal cord or the nerves that come off the sides of the spinal cord, this pressure causes the nerves below the area of compression to go "haywire". Depending on which nerve level is compressed, you may have pain, numbness, tingling and or weakness in the muscles controlled by the nerve in question. Many times there is little or no pain at the site of compression while the symptoms are in the arm/hand, etc. However when pressure is taken off the nerve in question, the symptoms in the shoulder, arm and hand begin to decrease and many times people all of the sudden notice that they DO have pain in the neck! Despite what you may think, this "neck pain" is a GOOD sign... This means that the compression on the nerve is decreasing and the pain will

eventually resolve as long as the correct treatment is being received.

What IS the correct treatment?

The first thing that needs done is a thorough evaluation to determine whether or not compression of a nerve is the cause of the problem. Cardin and Miller Physical Therapy's expert Physical Therapists can perform a 1-hour evaluation in which we would take you through a series of special tests and movements that tell us the cause of the problem. We also check movement patterns to see what your flexibility restrictions are in regards to the neck and address these. For example, if you cannot turn your head to drive, we would note that and work specifically on that issue so that you can restore enough motion to turn your head to drive safely. We also check the strength of your neck and shoulder muscles and address any deficits there as well. Our Therapists use various manual techniques as well as a traction device to unload pressure from the nerve to abolish arm symptoms and to restore normal flexibility, strength and function to the shoulder, arm and hand. We focus on treating the CAUSE of the problem versus just treating the symptoms.

CALL TODAY To Set Up Your FREE SCREEN to speak with one of our EXPERTS - 717-245-0400. Most insurance also allow patients to see a Physical Therapist without a Dr's script for the first 30 days. This allows you to avoid long wait times to see a physician. Research shows that the sooner you seek and begin treatment the faster and more complete your recover. Please email me with any questions you may have smiller@cardinmillerpt.com.

Steve Miller PT, C.Ped is the owner of Cardin and Miller Physical Therapy. Please contact me with any questions: smiller@cardinmillerpt.com My column appears in the Sentinel's Thrive section biweekly and on-line via Cumberlink.com