

## 5 Tests to Determine if You Have a Pinched Nerve in Your Neck

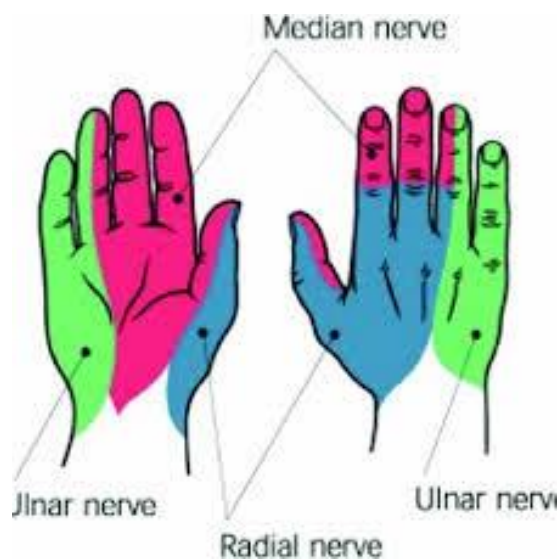
A pinched nerve in the neck occurs when pressure is applied to a nerve that is exiting the neck. The pressure can be from a disc, bone, muscle, tendon, or some other type of tissue. Continued pressure on a nerve can result in the following:

1. Pain in the neck that radiates into the arm, and possibly beyond the elbow. Pain may even radiate into the fingertips.



2. Hand, arm, or shoulder muscle weakness
3. Numbness or decreased sensation in the arm, wrist, or hand
4. Tingling, pins, and needles sensations (paresthesia)
5. Pain in the arm, wrist, and hand that is aggravated by neck movements
6. Feeling that the hand has fallen asleep

The first three tests are designed to see if there is any stress on any of the three main nerves of the arm: median, ulnar, or radial. The image below conveys which area of the hand each nerve affects.



### *Arm tension test (3 nerves)*

First perform these 3 tests on your non-painful arm for comparison. The first test places tension on the median nerve.

**Median nerve tension test:** Test non-painful arm first. Extend your arm (elbow) out to the side of you. Turn wrist outward so palm is facing away from body. Extend wrist and laterally bend your neck away from the arm. Side bend your neck away from the pain while extending the wrist and hand. Repeat the same test on the painful arm. If you cannot extend the elbow or the wrist without increased pain and/or symptoms you have tested positive for the median arm tension test.



**Ulnar nerve tension test:** Test unaffected arm first. With arm out to the side bend elbow fully and extend wrist. Make a circle with your thumb and pointer finger. Flip your hand palm up and see if able to place the circle over your eye. Then side bend neck away from hand. Repeat the same test on the painful arm. If you cannot obtain the described position without increased pain and/or symptoms you have tested positive for the ulnar arm tension test.



**Radial nerve tension test:** Test unaffected arm first. With the arm at your side, take your hand and twist so it is facing palm out. Flip your hand up so the palm is now facing the ceiling. Side bend neck away from hand. Repeat the same test on the painful arm. If you cannot obtain the described position without increased pain and/or symptoms you have tested positive for the radial arm tension test.



**Neck Compression Test: Spurling Test.** You should perform this test if you tested positive for any of the three arm tension tests. Once again, you want to begin on your non-painful side to get a good baseline.

Extend your head back. With your neck extended, tilt your head to the painful side. Hold this position for 30 seconds. If you feel neck pain, pain or tingling that radiates down the arm, or numbness, then you have tested positive.

Perform the same movement on the painful side.

If you feel neck pain, pain or tingling that radiates down the arm, or numbness, then you have tested positive.



**Relief test:** For this test, we want to determine if relieving tension on the nerve will reduce your symptoms. Place your painful arm on a pillow for support. Tilt your head AWAY from the painful side. Use your non-painful arm to hold it there up to 30 seconds. Does this position relieve your symptoms? Do you feel less numbness and tingling in the arm? Or you might feel a warming sensation in your arm as it regains sensation. Relief of symptoms indicates a positive test.