

# Your Neck Affects Your Elbow and Wrist

Sensation and strength around your elbow, forearm, wrist and hand are run by spinal nerves from the lower half of your neck. These nerves exit your spinal cord from gaps between the vertebrae, group together under the collarbone (forming the "brachial plexus") and then branch off to the shoulder, underarm and arm. Some nerves eventually reach right to the fingertips. Here's an amazing fact: some nerve cells powering the touch receptors and muscles in your fingers stretch all the way up the arm, past the shoulder, into the neck to connect directly with the spinal cord. That's a big reach!



**Dr Tat Loo: Chiropractor**

However, this big reach can introduce problems. Any irritation or jam up along the path of the nerves, e.g. around the spine, collar-bone/shoulder blade joint (the "acromioclavicular joint"), the elbow or the wrist can affect the nerves as they run by. Common symptoms: tingling, numbness, aching, pain, tiredness or weakness. Your individual symptoms will be unique

and dependent on the specific combination of body structure issues and daily activities you experience. If you've noticed these symptoms getting more frequent or severe, know that your body structure and nerve health may be deteriorating, possibly due to previous injury, work activities or other stressors.

Although it's easy to think of nerves as electrical wires carrying current, its more accurate to think of them as part of a communications network – just like the Internet. And just like the Internet, events which happen locally – directly around a nerve – and events a long way away, can affect function. Disturbances around the mid-spine or rib joints can alter neck balance, which in turn can lead to symptoms which look like tennis elbow or carpal tunnel. In this case, you can see why treatment on just the elbow or wrist may not be that helpful.

As a chiropractor I don't focus on treating or suppressing symptoms: I use them to help track down root causes. By working directly with your spine and other deep joints (without drugs or surgery) chiropractic care promotes total body structure wellbeing. As your total body structure health improves, many of these nerve-type symptoms will settle of their own accord.

This content reflects personal opinion of Dr Tat Loo, a Dunedin-based chiropractor.

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