

## **What causes numbness and tingling?**

Numbness and tingling, also known as paresthesia, is a burning or prickling sensation that is usually felt in the hands, arms, legs, or feet, but can also occur in other parts of the body. The sensation, which happens without warning, is usually painless and described as tingling or numbness, skin crawling, or itching.

Most people have experienced temporary paresthesia -- a feeling of "pins and needles" -- at some time in their lives when they have sat with legs crossed for too long, or fallen asleep with an arm crooked under their head. It happens when sustained pressure is placed on a nerve. The feeling quickly goes away once the pressure is relieved.

Chronic numbness or tingling can be a symptom of any number of disorders: stroke, tumor, multiple sclerosis - to name a few. Also, nerve entrapment disorders, where a nerve gets compressed or restricted by nearby tissues can cause paresthesia accompanied by pain. (Carpel Tunnel Syndrome is an example of a nerve entrapment disorder). COVID-19 can also cause numbness and tingling in some people. It is difficult to predict who may get paresthesia following COVID.

## **How is paresthesia diagnosed?**

Diagnostic evaluation is based on determining the underlying condition causing the paresthetic sensations. Medical history, physical examination, and laboratory tests are essential for the diagnosis. Doctors may order additional tests depending on the suspected cause of the paresthesia. If there is concern your symptoms are related to your history of COVID-19, your doctor may ask you about your course with the illness.

## **How is paresthesia treated?**

Proper treatment of paresthesia depends on the exact diagnosis of the underlying cause.

- Be sure you take any medication as directed. If you think you are having a reaction, please call your provider.
- Do not miss any appointments and please call if you are having trouble.
- It is important that you know your medications and test results and can share them with your provider so they can better care for you.
- Working closely with your medical provider is an important part of your treatment.

## **When should I call for help?**

**Call 911** anytime you think you need emergency care. For example, call if:

- Have symptoms of a stroke like:
  - Sudden loss of movement in one side of your face or body.
  - New numbness, tingling, or weakness to one side of your body or face.
  - Trouble speaking or understanding what someone is saying to you
  - Sudden trouble walking or balancing.
  - Sudden and worst headache of your life.
- Signs of other emergent conditions like:
  - Sudden loss of bowel or bladder control.
  - Weakness, numbness, or tingling in both legs or in the pelvis.

**Call your doctor now or seek urgent medical care if:**

- Your symptoms are worse than normal

**Monitor your symptoms and health closely.** Please call your health care provider if you are not improving like you normally do. Following up with your doctor is a very important part of your health and safety.

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Adapted from: NINDS. Paresthesia Information Page. Access at: <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/>

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