

Tingling

Patients often complain of tingling or paraesthesiae. If it is in the distribution of the nerve root as it leaves the spine, then it may suggest a problem with that nerve, but if it is more generalised then there may be another neurological problem. Sometimes if there is pressure on the spinal cord itself then you can have odd electrical pains/tingling due to myelopathy – damage to the cord. If the tingling is in the distribution of a dermatome (see arm or leg pain sheet) then it may signify a problem with the nerve in the spine. Sometimes when numbness has been a problem and the pressure is taken off a nerve by an operation then tingling may be felt – due to recovery and/or inflammation of the nerve.

Assessment

A full history and examination needs to be taken and then further tests organised if indicated. Besides imaging (MRI, XR, CT) other tests such as blood tests or nerve conduction studies may be requested (these are done at Frenchay), especially if the problem is felt to be due to the nerve away from the spine.