

Nerve Injury

Summary

Nerves carry sensory information from the skin back to the spinal cord and brain to give us the sense of touch. This is particularly important in the hand as function becomes much more difficult without it. Nerves also control muscle function. The nerves to the intrinsic muscles of the hand are deep and injuries are relatively rare, but if missed the reduced function can be significant.

Treatment

The fingers and thumb have two nerves. If you cut one of them you will likely notice altered sensation along one side. This **should be repaired within 72 hours** as the ends retract making repair more difficult. The operation is **often done before this to prevent infection**. **Partial nerve injuries can be difficult to diagnose**. You may only notice a difference when the sensation is directly compared to an area that is normal. Even partial nerve injuries should be repaired due to the small risk of a painful neuroma, when the nerve endings are trapped within scar and become painful when pressed.

Nerves also control muscle function. Muscles providing gross function for the hand are in the forearm therefore out of harms way with a hand injury. The intrinsic muscles of the hand provide finer control and their nerves cross the wrist and are in the hand. These branches are quite deep and injuries are relatively rare, however **if missed the reduced dexterity and function can be significant**.

