



# How can I treat a pinched nerve?

Edited by ADAM BIBLE

## a CHIROPRACTOR says:

You feel the pain of a pinched or compressed nerve when a nerve is inflamed (the condition is known as neuritis) due to a misalignment in the body's system.

**TREATMENT:** A chiropractor will treat your pain by realigning your body, which might involve manipulation of your spine, or legs, arms, and neck, with **chiropractic adjustments**. You'll also be treated with rehabilitative exercises or **physiotherapy** (using ultrasound treatment, electrotherapy, or ice packs) to reduce inflammation, pain, or muscle spasms. It may require more than a single treatment to get long-lasting results.

**MANAGEMENT:** Maintain a **balanced diet** and **healthy weight**, and stay active. Be sure to avoid prolonged inactivity. Your chiropractor might use **flexion distraction**, a decompression technique that requires a specially designed table, to take pressure off your spine and help with alignment. If your bone structure predisposes you to developing a pinched nerve, you'll be a candidate for ongoing care.

—Robert Hayden, D.C., Ph.D., R.N.,  
Georgia delegate to the American  
Chiropractic Association

## a ROLFER says:

A pinched nerve is often a sign that your body is out of alignment. It can also be caused by soft tissue that has become tight, a compressed joint, or a vertebral disc pressing on a nerve root. Something in your body needs to be returned to its "original blueprints."

**TREATMENT:** A Rolfer will manually manipulate your joint connections and soft tissue—including muscles, connective tissue (myofascia), tendons, ligaments—using **hand and finger pressure**, or occasionally elbows or knuckles. The aim is to increase your range of motion, reduce chronic tightness, and eliminate any impingement of the nerves.

**MANAGEMENT:** The best way to prevent a pinched nerve is to keep the body aligned, decompressed, and functioning at its highest potential. A **complete Roling program**—it's traditionally performed in a series of ten 60- to 90-minute sessions—can help. The goal is not simply to alleviate your pain, but to change and organize the structure of your body and muscles so you don't need constant treatment. See [rolf.org](http://rolf.org) for more.

—Benjamin Shield, Ph.D., a craniosacral  
therapist and Rolfer in Los Angeles

## a TCM PRACTITIONER says:

What many people describe as a "pinched nerve" may actually be a knot of muscular tension, knotted qi (energy), or poor blood flow. Neck pain, specifically, can come from an emotional, physical, or spiritual rigidity, and an inability to relax.

**TREATMENT:** Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners might use a form of **Asian Bodywork Therapy** such as **tui na** or **shiatsu** to reduce tension in tight muscles and tendons. A hands-on physical treatment, tui na seeks to regulate the proper flow of qi and blood through a painful or stagnant area. **Herbal formulas** may also be prescribed to help balance your body's systems and create more internal ease. The amount of treatment needed varies by person, but it usually takes one or two treatments to bring relief.

**MANAGEMENT:** A diet based on organic, whole foods, regular exercise like qigong, Asian Bodywork Therapy, and **periodic acupuncture** can be beneficial. **Meditation** can help you identify any attitudes that may be contributing to the problem. To find a TCM practitioner, go to [nccaom.org](http://nccaom.org).

—Bryn Clark, Dipl. O.M., New Harmony  
Center for Health & Wellness, Beverly, Mass.