

# Nerve transfer to partially restore upper limb function in tetraplegia

Information for the public

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There are no major safety concerns with this procedure but not much good evidence about how well it works. This procedure can be used but only when patients have regular checks to see how well it is working or if it has caused problems.

Tetraplegia is when both the arms and legs are partially or totally paralysed because of nerve damage caused by trauma to the spinal cord in the neck. Some people with nerve damage lower in the neck can have nerve transfer to try and improve function in the upper limbs. This procedure involves connecting an undamaged, functioning, but non-essential nerve near the injury to the damaged essential nerve. The aim, with specialised therapy, is to recover some strength in the muscles supplied by the nerve, and improve arm and hand function.

[NHS Choices](#) may be a good place to find out more. NICE's information on [interventional procedures guidance](#) has more about what a procedure is and how we assess them.

## Is this procedure right for me?

If you've been offered this procedure, your healthcare professionals should discuss with you what is involved, and tell you about the risks and benefits. They should talk with you about your options, and listen carefully to your views and concerns. Your family can be involved too, if you wish. All of this should happen before you agree (consent) to have the procedure. You should also be told how to find more information about the procedure. Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

## Some questions to think about

- What does the procedure involve?
- What are the possible benefits? How likely am I to get them?
- What are the risks or side effects? How likely are they?
- What happens if the procedure doesn't work or something goes wrong?
- What happens if I don't want the procedure? Are there other treatments available?

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