
Understanding Numbness in the Fingers: A Self-Care Guide

Numbness in the fingers can be an alarming symptom, and it's definitely worth a trip to the doctor to rule out any serious conditions. However, much of the time that numbness is simply a result of trigger points in muscles irritating a nerve that runs to the hand. This irritation can happen at more than one spot along the nerve's pathway—from the wrist to the elbow, the front of the chest, the back of the shoulder, or the neck.

The Connection Between Trigger Points and Acupuncture

Trigger points are small, sensitive areas in your muscles that can cause pain both at the point itself and in other areas of your body (referred pain). These points often correspond with traditional acupuncture points, which isn't surprising given our growing understanding of how the body's myofascial (muscle and connective tissue) system overlaps with traditional acupuncture meridians. When you apply pressure to these points, you stimulate the same nerve fibers that respond to acupuncture needles, making self-massage a powerful tool for home care.

Getting Started with Self-Massage

The key to effective self-massage is gentle, sustained pressure rather than aggressive rubbing. You'll need a massage ball - while a tennis ball works to start, I recommend the Yoga Tune Up therapy balls for their durability and perfect density. When working on a point:

- Start with light pressure and gradually increase as the tissue releases
- If you find yourself holding your breath, that's a sign you're using too much pressure
- Spend no more than a couple of minutes on each area.
- Repeat every 2-3 days
- If you experience any nerve sensations (tingling, numbness, or sharp pain), adjust the position of the ball

Key Areas to Address

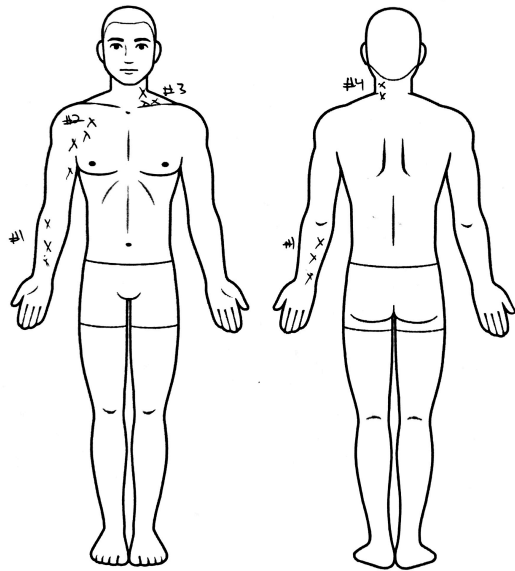
For numbness in the outer fingers (ring/pinky), check for trigger points in this order: front and back of the forearm, elbow, shoulder blade, back of neck.

For numbness in the first three fingers (thumb/index/middle), check for trigger points in this order: front and back of the forearm, front of the chest, front of the neck, back of the neck.

See the illustration below for help locating these common trigger points. If you're currently working with me for acupuncture, I'll go over this at your next appointment. I've also included some helpful video links.

See the illustration below for help locating common trigger points.

Pain or Numbness in Thumb, Pointer and/or Middle Finger



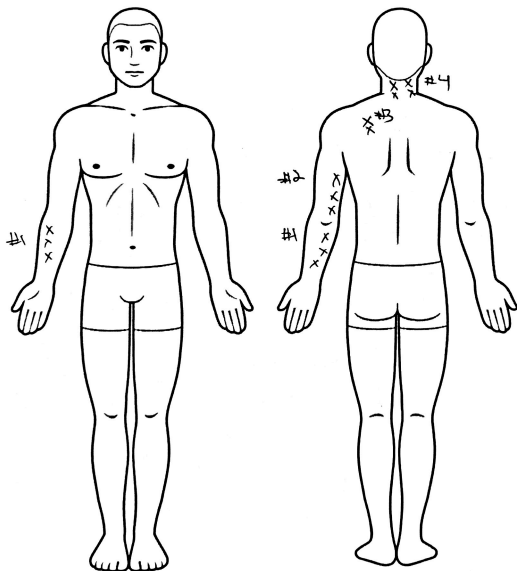
#1 Forearm: For the front of the forearm, hold your arm behind your back, parallel to the floor. Place a ball between your forearm and the wall and lean into it. For the back of the forearm, face the wall, hold your arm parallel to floor and place a ball between the arm and the wall. Lean into the ball.

#2 Pecs and upper arm: Use a ball against a wall.

#3 Front of neck: Lean into a doorframe, with a ball between the frame and your collarbone. [Here's a video to help you.](#)

#4 Back of neck: Two balls in a tote/sock, placed on a yoga block or stack of books. Lie down on the floor and position the balls at the top of your neck. Try nodding up and down and side to side.

Pain or Numbness in Ringer and/or Little Finger



#1 Forearm: For the front of the forearm, hold your arm behind your back, parallel to the floor. Place a ball between your forearm and the wall and lean into it. For the back of the forearm, face the wall, hold your arm parallel to floor and place a ball between the arm and the wall. Lean into the ball.

#2 Back of elbow: Two balls in a tote on a flat surface like a table. Position yourself at a height you can place the back of your upper arm, just above the elbow, on the balls. Slowly move up and down the back of the arm. You can turn the palm of the hand face up and face down as you do this.

#3 Upper corner of the scapula: [I like this video that shows how to roll out your upper back.](#) The best moves to get at the spot that cause numbness down the arm and into the fingers are demonstrated at 3:45 to the end of the video.

#4 Back of neck: Two balls in a tote/sock, placed on a yoga block or stack of books. Lie down on the floor and position the balls at the top of your neck. Try nodding up and down and side to side.