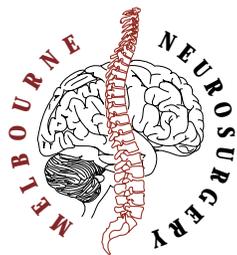


DISEASE INFORMATION

Meralgia Paresthetica

*Lateral Femoral Cutaneous Nerve
Syndrome*

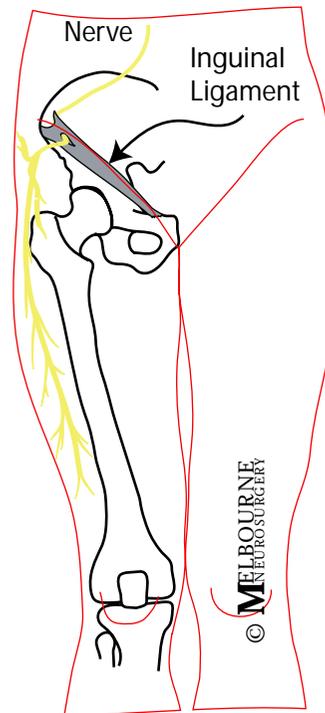


WHAT IS MERALGIA PARESTHETICA ?

This is where a nerve that runs to the outside of the thigh just below the hip and above the knee is compressed or not functioning correctly.

This nerve is called the Lateral Femoral Cutaneous Nerve.

Meralgia Paresthetica is a syndrome where the lateral femoral cutaneous nerve of the thigh is irritated or compressed to cause a constellation of problems.



What does the Lateral Femoral Cutaneous Nerve do ?

The nerve only supplies sensation. The nerve runs from the spine around the inside of the abdomen (belly) to an area just above the hip in the groin.

It passes through a ligament called the inguinal ligament (the one you get a hernia through). The hole it passes through is small and it angulates sharply at this point.

This is the main area of compromise. It then passes down inside the thigh until it goes through the fascia of the thigh to supply the skin. It takes the sensation from this area back up to the brain.

WHAT CAUSES THE PROBLEM ?

1. The sharp bend in the nerve may allow the nerve to be stretched and therefore damaged in the inguinal ligament..
2. Stretching of the nerve because of being overweight causing the nerve to lengthen in the thigh.
3. Compression of the nerve by:
 - Belt
 - Tight tool belt
 - Tight Pants
4. Repetitive trauma to the nerve.
5. Constant pressure on the nerve in long face down surgery, usually on the spine
5. Often there is no specific cause.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON SYMPTOMS ?

1. Numbness on the outside of the thigh

The diagram shows the area of skin the nerve commonly goes to. The numb patch can vary from person to person.

2. Burning on the outside of the thigh

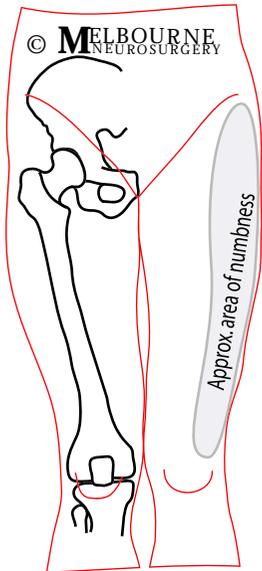
This is because the pain fibres in the nerve are affected and are sending mixed messages to the brain.

3. Tingling on the outside of the thigh

This is due to the partial damage to the nerve and usually occurs before the numbness gets bad.

4. Sensation of ants walking on the skin.

5. Symptoms worse at end of the day.



The area of numbness

HOW DO YOU DIAGNOSE MERALGIA PARESTHETICA ?

Your local doctor will usually make the diagnosis based on the symptoms that you are complaining of.

It is an uncommon condition and difficult to recognise.

He may not have seen it before and will send you to a specialist to make the diagnosis.

The specialists you may see are:

- Neurologists
- Plastic surgeons
- Neurosurgeons
- Rheumatologists

HOW DO YOU TREAT MERALGIA PARESTHETICA ?

It may improve without any treatment.

Usually the first thing to do is to find if anything is making the symptoms worse. These are then avoided.

Weight loss helps if this is a problem.

If you wear a tight belt braces may help.

An injection of steroids around the nerve may help.

A cold pack around the nerve helps some people.

Surgery is an option.

Everything is usually tried prior to considering surgery

WHAT IS THE REASONS FOR HAVING AN OPERATION ?

The commonest reason is that the symptoms in your leg has been causing significant discomfort or that you have been getting worse. Usually non operative therapy has failed.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF OPERATION ?

1. **Trial steroid and local anaesthetic injection** around the nerve. This may cause permanent improvement and is also diagnostic.

2. **Decompression of the nerve in the inguinal ligament** with a tranverse cut in the thigh to get to the nerve.

2. **Division of the nerve at the inguinal ligament** with a tranveres cut in the thigh to get to the nerve. This usually the best surgical alternative.

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