

Tinel's Test

Purpose

- To test for entrapment of the median nerve in the carpal tunnel

Technique

- Have the patient seat with elbow flexed and forearm in full supination
- Begin by tapping gently with your finger over the area of the watch band on the median nerve
- Continue percussing and move up towards the palmar creases
- Return back to the watch band area then move radially towards the palmaris longus tendon

Results

- Positive: tingling paresthesia (i.e. aching and numbness) is felt over the palmar aspect of the hand

Diagnostic Accuracy

- Reports of sensitivity and specificity are vary but most agree this test has a low sensitivity and specificity

Notes

- Considerable intra- and inter-examiner differences exist in the range of forces generated by the different Tinel's techniques that are used in clinical practice

References

1. Bickley LS et al. Bates' Guide to Physical Examination and History Taking. 11th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. 2013;634.
2. Lifchez SD et al. Intra- and inter-examiner variability in performing Tinel's test. J Hand Surg Am. 2010;35(2):212-6.
3. Orient, JM. Sapira's Art and Science of Bedside Diagnosis. 4th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. 2010;519.