

# Peripheral Nerve Disorders: Chapter 18. Diagnosis of brachial and lumbosacral plexus lesions (Handbook of Clinical Neurology)

Nens Van Alfen, Martijn J.A. Malessy

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To most doctors, brachial and lumbosacral plexopathies are known as difficult disorders, because of their complicated anatomy and relatively rare occurrence. Both the brachial, lumbar, and sacral plexuses are extensive PNS structures stretching from the neck to axillary region and running in the paraspinal lumbar and pelvic region, containing 100000-200000 axons with 12-15 major terminal branches supplying almost 50 muscles in each limb. The most difficult part in diagnosing a plexopathy is probably that it requires an adequate amount of clinical suspicion combined with a thorough anatomical knowledge of the PNS and a meticulous clinical examination. Once a set of symptoms is recognized as a plexopathy the patients' history and course of the disorder will often greatly limit the differential diagnosis. The most common cause of brachial plexopathy is probably neuralgic amyotrophy and the most common cause of lumbosacral plexopathy is diabetic amyotrophy. Traumatic and malignant lesions are fortunately rarer but just as devastating. This chapter provides an overview of both common and rarer brachial and lumbosacral plexus disorders, focusing on clinical examination, the use of additional investigative techniques, prognosis, and treatment.



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