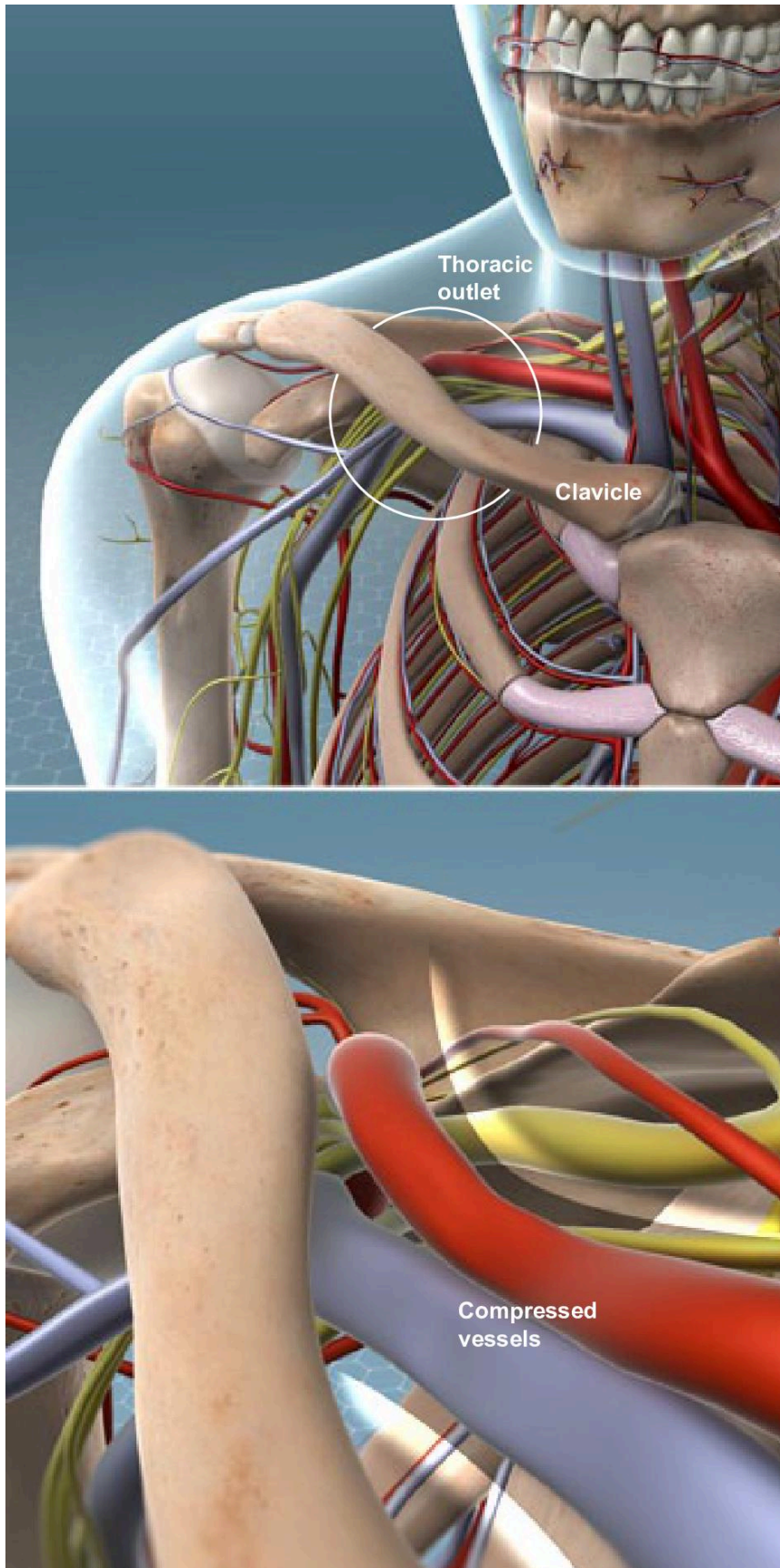




Thoracic Outlet Syndrome



Overview

This is a label given to a group of disorders. In these disorders, nerves or blood vessels are compressed in the space between your collarbone and the underlying rib. This space is called the "thoracic outlet."

Causes

Thoracic outlet syndrome develops in many ways. The nerves and blood vessels in the thoracic outlet can be injured by physical trauma, such as from an auto accident. They can be injured by repetitive arm and shoulder movements, which may be related to your job or to a sport you play. These nerves and blood vessels can be compressed by a tumor or by a problem with the bones in that area. They can be affected by poor posture, and by changes your body experiences during pregnancy. In some people, the cause of thoracic outlet syndrome is not known.

Symptoms

Symptoms depend on what gets compressed. If it's your nerves, you may experience pain in your neck, shoulder, arm or hand. You may have numbness or tingling in your arm or your fingers. You may have a weak grip. If your blood vessels are compressed, your arm or hand may feel weak or cold. The skin of your hand may appear bluish. Your fingers may feel numb or tingly. Your arm may feel painful. It may swell. You may develop blood clots in your upper body. You may feel a throbbing lump under your skin near your collarbone.

Treatment

Treatment options depend on your specific needs. You may benefit from physical therapy. You may benefit from medications that control pain and inflammation, or from medications that control blood clots. If these are not effective, you may benefit from surgery to relieve compression in your thoracic outlet.