Tinel's sign: The sign that a nerve is irritated. Tinel's sign is positive when lightly banging (percussing) over the nerve elicits a sensation of tingling, or 'pins and needles,' in the distribution of the nerve. For example, in carpal tunnel syndrome, where the median nerve is compressed at the wrist, the test for Tinel's sign is often positive, eliciting tingling in the thumb, index, and middle fingers.