

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common cause of workplace disability in those who perform repetitive motions of the hand and wrist.

If you have experienced numbness, tingling, or weakness in your first three fingers (thumb, index, and middle fingers), you may want to learn more about carpal tunnel syndrome.

What is it?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a condition caused by pressure on the median nerve, which travels through the wrist and supplies sensation and movement to certain parts of your hand. It is most common among people ages 30-60 and more prevalent in women than men.

Causes

- Typing on a keyboard
- Sewing
- Assembly line work
- Painting
- Writing
- Use of tools (especially hand tools or tools that vibrate)
- Sports such as racquetball or handball
- Playing some musical instruments

Symptoms

- Numbness, tingling, or weakness in the thumb and the index and middle fingers in one or both hands
- Numbness or tingling of the palm of the hand
- Pain extending to the elbow
- Pain in the wrist or hand in one or both hands
- Problems with fine finger movements (coordination) in one or both hands
- Wasting away of the muscle under the thumb (in advanced cases)
- Weak grip or difficulty carrying bags
- Weakness in one or both hands

Treatment

Your healthcare provider may put your wrist in a splint or brace to keep it from putting pressure on the nerve. This may be full-time or worn only at night.



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Medications such as anti-inflammatory drugs or corticosteroids may be prescribed to reduce inflammation.

Carpal tunnel syndrome can be treated successfully by chiropractors using methods such as manipulation of the wrist, elbow, and upper spine, ultrasound therapy, and muscle release techniques.

Acupuncture is another option for treating carpal tunnel syndrome. Studies suggest that acupuncture restores normal nerve function and can provide long-term pain relief for this condition.

Patients who do not improve with other treatments may require surgery, which involves cutting the ligament that is pressing on the nerve. This procedure provides complete relief in approximately 95% of patients with carpal tunnel syndrome.

Prevention

The best way to avoid the pain and disability associated with carpal tunnel syndrome is to prevent it from occurring in the first place. Consider the following advice:

- Stretch or flex your arms and fingers before beginning work and at frequent intervals
- Alternate tasks to reduce the amount of repetitive movements
- Modify or change daily activities that put pressure on your wrists
- Modify your work environment. If you use a computer, have an adjustable keyboard table and chair, and a wrist rest

Sources:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001469/>

<http://www.umm.edu/altmed/articles/carpal-tunnel-000031.htm>



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