

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) is a painful disorder of the wrist and hand. The carpal tunnel is a narrow tunnel formed by the bones and soft tissue of your wrist; it protects the median nerve which gives you feeling in your thumb, index, middle, and ½ of your ring finger. Compression on the nerve by inflamed tendons/ligaments causes the symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome.

SYMPTOMS:

- ◆ Numbness or tingling in your hand and fingers
- ◆ Pain in your wrist, palm, or radiating up to your forearm
- ◆ More numbness or pain at night which may wake you up; waking up frequently with your hand having "gone to sleep"
- ◆ Increase in symptoms when you use your hand/wrist, such as opening a door, typing, carrying groceries
- ◆ Trouble gripping objects
- ◆ Weakness in your thumb

Aggravating factors?

- ◆ Doing the same motion over and over again, such as keyboarding.
- ◆ Job-related-manual labor jobs and/or using tools that require frequent pinching or gripping with the wrist held bent. Vibration- hammering; jackhammers
- ◆ Hobbies such as golfing, tennis, playing the violin/piano, canoeing, knitting
- ◆ Obesity
- ◆ Infrequently diseases, such as diabetes or thyroid problems

PREVENTION:

- ◆ Is your work environment or workstation efficient or user friendly for doing tasks.
- ◆ Your monitor should be slightly below eye level.

- ◆ Your keyboard height should allow your elbows to bend at about 90 degrees.
- ◆ Wrists should not rest on the desk edge
- ◆ Sit in a chair that supports your back.
- ◆ Consider buying an ergonomic keyboard and mouse.
- ◆ Break up computer use into short sessions. Stretch during breaks.
- ◆ Make sure light is adequate, so you are not straining to see your monitor.
- ◆ Switch hands doing work tasks.

TREATMENT:

- ◆ If you are diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome, your practitioner may prescribe a wrist splint to wear at night and/or during the day. The splint holds your wrist in a neutral position, which relieves pressure on the median nerve.
- ◆ Anti-inflammatory medication, such as ibuprofen, Alleve®.
- ◆ Vitamin B6.
- ◆ Refrain from the activities that caused or may have aggravated the symptoms.
- ◆ Modify the way you used hand doing tasks.
- ◆ Rehabilitation exercises may help
- ◆ If condition is not responding to conservative measures, additional electrodiagnostic studies maybe required and referral. Depending on severity, surgical decompression is a further treatment.