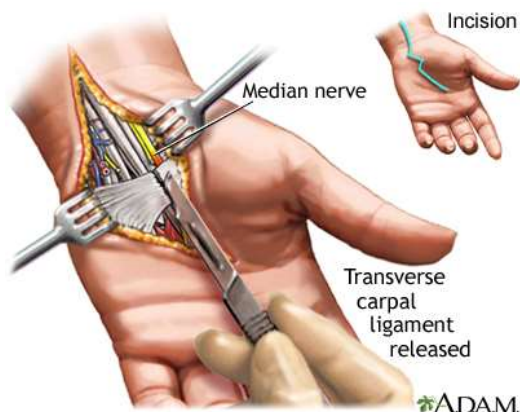


Stretch and Exercise

Keeping your wrists strong and flexible can alleviate strain on the carpal tunnel. The stretches and exercises inside can be done three to five times a week. (A 16-ounce bottle or can of food can be used instead of a dumbbell.)



Keeping up with an exercise routine to prevent carpal tunnel will help prevent the need for surgery.

Initial Treatment

Initial treatment generally involves resting the hand and wrist for at least two weeks to avoid activities that may worsen symptoms. Cool (ice) packs can relieve swelling and pressure on the median nerve and provide immediate temporary relief. Immobilize wrist to avoid further damage from twisting and bending.



Prevention

There are no proven strategies to prevent CTS, but minimizing stress on your hands and wrists should help with some of the risk factors. Use the following suggestions to reduce hand and wrist stress:

Reduce your force and relax your grip.

Most people use more force than they need to for manual tasks. Press keys softly, don't grip objects (pens, tools, phones...) more tightly than you need to.

Take frequent breaks. Stop and stretch your hands and wrists occasionally. Break up activities to change motions being performed. Breaking up activities is especially important if you use equipment that vibrates or that requires you to exert a great amount of force.

Watch your posture and form. Keep your wrists as straight as possible when working. Sit up straight, the compression of nerves in your back and neck can affect other nerves throughout your body.

Keep your hands warm. Warm muscles are less likely to get injured. Use fingerless gloves if necessary to keep the muscles in your wrists and hands warm.

Use ergonomic equipment and/or tools when they are available.

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CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME



Environmental Health & Safety



Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is the result of the median nerve, which runs from the forearm to the palm of the hand, becoming pressed or squeezed in the wrist. The nerve can be compressed from irritation or swelling of the tendons that run near the nerve. This can result in pain; weakness, numbness, or tingling in the wrist, hand and/or fingers; or a burning or itching numbness in the hand or fingers. CTS symptoms are usually worse at night.

The symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome are similar to several other medical conditions. Consult your physician for a diagnosis if you think you have carpal tunnel syndrome.

Causes

CTS is often the result of a combination of factors that increase pressure on the median nerve and tendons in the carpal tunnel. People who have jobs that involve repetitive hand/wrist motions may be more likely to develop CTS. These include:

- All day computer users
- Cashiers
- Assembly-line workers
- Musicians
- Auto Mechanics

Other contributing factors include:

- Trauma or injury to the wrist that causes swelling.

- Fluid retention during pregnancy or menopause.
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Diabetes

Note: Do not do these exercises if you already have pain or numbness. They are meant as a preventive measure and may aggravate an existing problem.

Limbering Up:

- Massage the inside and outside of hand with thumb and fingers.
- Grasp fingers and gently bend back wrist. Hold for five seconds.
- Gently pull thumb down and back until you feel the stretch. Hold for five seconds.
- Clench fist tightly, then release, fanning out fingers. Repeat five times.



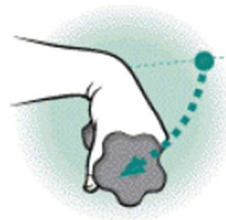
Wrist Rotation:

Stand, or sit, with your elbows close to your waist, your forearm extended in front of you and parallel to the floor, and your palms facing down. Make fists with both hands and make circles with your fists in one direction. Next, open your hands, extend your fingers and repeat the entire sequence.



Wrist Curl:

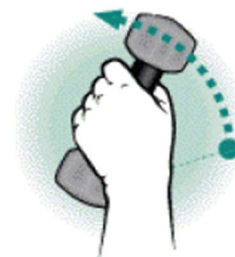
Stand, or sit, with your elbows close to your waist, your forearm extended in front of



you and parallel to the floor, and your palms facing down. Grasp a one-pound dumbbell in each hand and slowly bend your wrists down, holding for five seconds. Do 10 repetitions.

Sideways Wrist Bend:

Stand, or sit, with your elbows close to your waist, your forearm extended in front of you and parallel to the floor, and your palms facing down. Grasp a one-pound dumbbell in each hand. Keeping your forearms still, slowly bend your wrists from side to side, moving the weights toward, then away from one another in a windshield wiper-like motion. Do 10 repetitions.



Wrist Twist:

Stand, or sit, with your elbows close to your waist, your forearm extended in front of you and parallel to the floor, and your palms facing down. Grasp a one-pound dumbbell in each hand and slowly turn your wrists and forearms until your palms are facing up, then turn them down again. Do 10 repetitions.

