

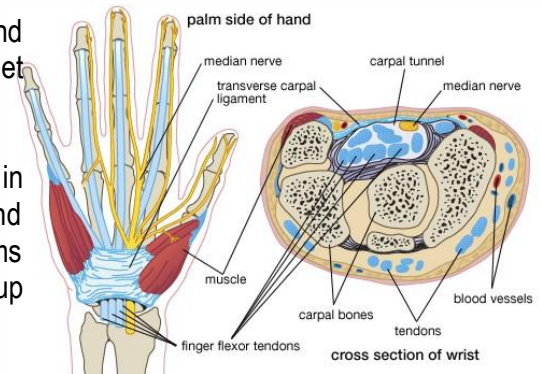
Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

02866328200

Important facts I

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common problem affecting the wrist and hand. Repetitive work and typing are often blamed but lots of people get this problem, regardless of the work they do.

Symptoms usually start gradually with burning, tingling or numbness in the hand. Patients report that their fingers may feel useless and swollen, even though little or no swelling is apparent. The symptoms often first appear in one or both hands at night. The person wakes up feeling the need to "shake out" the hand or wrist.



The condition is caused by anything that makes the area inside the carpal tunnel of the hand smaller, or that increases the size of the tissues in the tunnel, for example an injury to the wrist. People with other conditions, such as diabetes or low thyroid function, and pregnant ladies are prone to carpal tunnel.

Work factors such as forceful and repetitive movements and working with a bent wrist posture are risk factors, as are smoking, obesity and a high caffeine intake. It is usually a combination of risk factors that causes the condition to develop.

A third of people will get better without any treatment within 6 months. The condition can recur. Up to 70% of people get better with conservative treatment. A few people need surgery to release the pressure on the tunnel. It is an effective operation but there is a risk of complications with all surgery so conservative management should be tried first.

The important thing is to keep moving and using the arm but avoid activities that aggravate the problem, such as forceful repetitive activities with your hand. Just as a runner would train slowly for a marathon, a sensible habit is to start new activities slowly and build gradually, as this allows the muscles and tendons to adapt and strengthen to respond to the new demand.

It helps to stay at work or to get back to work as soon as possible, even if you have symptoms. **Your hand will usually not get any worse at work than it will at home.** If you have a repetitive or manual job, then you may need some help or modification to your workload initially, but generally all that is needed is some simple changes. Talk to your line manager and ask for help to modify your job while the problem resolves.

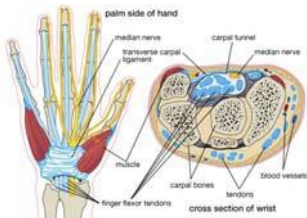
Warning signs

If you have severe pain that does not improve or even gets worse over several weeks, or if you are unwell with your arm pain, then you should consult your doctor.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Important Facts 2

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Management tips

- ◆ **Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is not serious**
- ◆ **The people who recover fastest from all musculoskeletal problems are those who stay active, exercise and get on with their lives, despite pain and stiffness.**
- ◆ Local corticosteroid injection (CSI) will give pain relief, with the effect lasting for one month. Long term benefits have not been shown. Two CSI do not provide significant additional benefit
- ◆ Use of night splints for 6 weeks in a neutral position is effective ◆ Carpal bone mobilization and nerve and tendon gliding exercises are effective in the short term
- ◆ Oral steroids give good short term benefit but are not as good as corticosteroids by injection
- ◆ Surgery is effective but it is invasive and holds a risk of complications

Exercise will aid recovery

- ◆ Yoga exercise will keep you fit and has been shown to help in carpal tunnel syndrome over 8 weeks
- ◆ General exercise keeps you fit and improves healing of all conditions
- ◆ Specific exercise may be needed to help restore your flexibility and strength if you have surgery.
- ◆ You should aim to resume your normal activities at home and at work gradually as your condition improves