

CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

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Computer users, meat packers, sewing machine operators, assembly-line workers, and musicians often get the same injury. They all use their hands in repetitive motions that put a strain on the wrist. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is the most commonly reported medical problem in the workplace today. It costs worker compensation millions of dollars per year.

How does Carpal Tunnel Occur?

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is caused because of excessive pressure on the median nerve as it passes through an opening in the wrist called the carpal tunnel. The carpal tunnel is a narrow passage formed by the wrist bones (on the bottom) and the transverse carpal ligament (on the top). Repetitive hand or wrist movements can put stress on the tendons, causing them to swell and press on the median nerve. This pressure causes pain, numbness, tingling, burning, and decreased movement of the hand. Any disease that causes carpal tunnel swelling, including pregnancy and thyroid disease, can compress the nerve.

Carpal Tunnel Signs

The following symptoms may be intermittent at first, but will worsen over time if not treated:

- Decreased motion of the fingers, hand, elbow, or shoulder
- Decreased hand strength
- Dull aching discomfort or pain that occurs mostly at night or early in the morning
- Severe night pain that awakens you during sleep
- Wrist pain that radiates to the forearm, shoulders, neck, and chest
- Dry skin, swelling, or color changes in hand
- Numbness in the hand, resulting in weakness or clumsiness
- Tingling in all but the little finger
- Weakness of the thumb

Don't try to diagnose your own problem. Let a chiropractor or medical doctor do that. Accurate diagnosing and dealing with the pain early will prevent more severe problems from developing.

Treatment of Carpal Tunnel

There are a wide array of treatments for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. In the early stages, discontinuing the triggering activity and wearing a brace, which keeps the wrist in a neutral position, will sometimes reduce symptoms. The brace is worn all day and night to prevent exacerbation of symptoms. Anti-inflammatory medications, including ibuprofen and aspirin, can help with the swelling. Cortisone injections sometimes give temporary relief, but they also do nothing to correct the problem, which is pressure on the median nerve. Surgery is recommended as a last resort. Success rates for surgery are

between 40-70%. In some cases after surgery scarring and weakness of the transverse ligament can further irritate the median nerve.

Chiropractic has been shown to help relieve carpal tunnel. Gentle manipulation is used to realign the wrist bones which were exerting pressure on the median nerve. Therapies such as ultrasound, interferential current, heat, and ice are also used to decrease the swelling of the ligament in the carpal tunnel. By reducing pressure on the nerve and permitting it to heal naturally, most patients are healed without resorting to invasive procedures such as surgery or injections.

Doctors of chiropractic have extensive training detecting and correcting nervous dysfunction. Discuss treatment of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome with your doctor today.