

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

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What Is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a condition caused by pinched nerves in the wrist. These nerves help your wrist and hand move and feel. When they become pinched, it can cause pain and discomfort. Risk factors for carpal tunnel syndrome are:

- A job that requires using your hand or wrist in the same way every day (such as using power tools that vibrate) or put stress on the hands (such as typing or working on an assembly line)
- Family history of carpal tunnel syndrome
- Past wrist injury
- Being overweight or obese
- Being pregnant
- Having certain health conditions like arthritis, diabetes, or underactive thyroid

What Are the Warning Signs of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

Symptoms can develop slowly and become more noticeable over time. These can include:

- Numbness, tingling, or pain in the fingers, hand, or forearm. Symptoms often are worse at night.
- Feeling like you are unable to make a fist or hold objects.
- Weakness in your hand and wrist.

How Is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask about your symptoms. He or she may also physically examine your arm, wrist, and fingers. In some cases, your doctor may do a test to check for muscle and nerve function. Further testing may be needed, including an ultrasound of your wrist or forearm, especially if the nerve and muscle tests are negative.

How Is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Treated?

There are several treatment options for carpal tunnel syndrome. Your doctor may suggest using a splint to support your wrist. A splint will hold your wrist in place and help the nerves in your arm heal. Over-the-counter pain medicines can help with swelling or pain. If the pain is severe, your doctor may suggest a stronger medicine,



called a steroid, which is injected into your wrist. In some cases, surgery may be needed. If not treated, carpal tunnel syndrome can cause permanent nerve damage.

Questions for My Doctor

- Should I change any of my daily activities?
- Am I at risk for permanent nerve damage?
- Do I need any further testing?
- Which treatment option is best for me?
- When can I expect my discomfort to go away?
- How can I prevent any further damage?
- How can I change my work activities?

Bottom Line

- Carpal tunnel syndrome is a condition that develops when the nerves in your wrist become pinched.
- Symptoms include numbness, pain and tingling in your forearm, wrist, and hand. They may also include feeling like you are unable to make a fist, or feeling weak in your hands and fingers.
- To diagnose carpal tunnel syndrome, your doctor will ask about your symptoms and may perform a physical examination of your arm, wrist, and fingers. Some people may need additional tests, like tests of nerve and muscle function.
- Treatment includes using a splint to stabilize your wrist and prevent more damage. Your doctor may also suggest over-the-counter pain medicines or steroid injections. In some cases, surgery may be needed.

For More Information



National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/carpal_tunnel/detail_carpal_tunnel.htm

American Academy of Family Physicians
<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/carpal-tunnel-syndrome.html>

American College of Rheumatology
https://www.rheumatology.org/Practice/Clinical/Patients/Diseases_And_Conditions/Carpal_Tunnel_Syndrome/