



Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

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Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and Chiropractic Care

As a result of today's working environment and people using so many technological devices, there are more people than ever before being diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome! If you suffer from carpal tunnel syndrome you know how these symptoms can affect your overall quality of life and limit your ability to do the things you love to do.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a condition that affects the arms, wrists, and hands. It may start to manifest itself through numbness, tingling (paresthesia, which is the “pins and needles” sensation), weakness or loss of strength to your hands, but can escalate to severe pain. Carpal tunnel syndrome regularly affects assembly line workers, grocery store clerks, data entry personnel and many others, but it has become more prevalent as more people use computers, playing video games and texting with the hands and wrists in compromised positions for extended periods of time. With today's work environments people are often found sitting at a desk working on a computer typing and using a mouse all day long. In addition to repetitive motion, poor posture and pressure on the wrists can contribute to carpal tunnel syndrome.



Dealing with carpal tunnel syndrome is more than just dealing with pain. Carpal tunnel syndrome can cause you to lose sleep — as you are unable to find a comfortable position — or make it difficult for you to work or enjoy your hobbies. Ignoring carpal tunnel syndrome can lead to permanent damage to the nerves in your hands.

How do we get carpal tunnel syndrome?

To help you understand how we get carpal tunnel syndrome to begin with, let's look at how our nerves interact with the bones in our wrists. The word “tunnel” in carpal tunnel syndrome is an apt description of the bone structure in our wrists. I'm sure everyone has driven through a tunnel, or under an arch-shaped bridge. The tunnel creates a protected opening for us to drive safely through. The same thing happens in our wrists.

The wrist starts at the distal ends of our two forearm bones (radius and ulna) and contains 8 carpal bones, these bones join to the proximal portions of the 5 metacarpal bones (long finger bones) in our hands. The carpal bones form a protective tunnel that allow nerves to pass through to our hands. These nerves are held in place by the flexor retinaculum (anterior annular ligament) acting like a zip-tie, keeping our nerves perfectly placed inside the carpal tunnel.

The major nerve controlling our hands is called the Median Nerve. The nerve roots exiting our spine at the neck (C6, C7, C8) and upper thoracic area (T1) form the median nerve. This nerve passes through our shoulder, down our arm, through the carpal tunnel, and controls the thumb, index finger, and parts of the middle and ring fingers.



Carpal tunnel syndrome occurs when the median nerve is compressed or pinched. Here are some of the ways you can get carpal tunnel syndrome.

1. The bones forming the carpal tunnel are misaligned causing the tunnel to “collapse,” putting pressure on the nerves, and causing inflammation and pain.
2. Direct pressure on the median nerve for extended periods of time.
3. The inflammation and swelling associated with osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis has also been known to narrow the carpal tunnel and irritate the nerve.
4. A fracture or multiple injuries to the wrist and hand.
5. Repetitive strain to the hands and wrists.

Preventing Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Proper posture at work is a key to avoiding carpal tunnel syndrome.

The greater the pressure being placed on your wrists, the greater the chances are you will get carpal tunnel syndrome. Pay attention to the way you are sitting at work. Are you leaning forward and transferring your weight to your wrists? Is your keyboard too close to your body forcing you to bend your wrists to type? Is your keyboard positioned in a way that requires your wrists to bear weight? As you sit at your desk, which part of your arm is resting on your desk — your forearm or your wrist?

Here are some posture tips you can use:

- Sit up straight with your shoulders over your hips, not in front of your hips. When your shoulders and head move forward, weight is transferred from your hips to your arms, and to your wrists. Slumping your shoulders forward or sitting with your head forward of your shoulders can also stretch and damage the median nerve which passes through your shoulders on its way to your wrist.
- Keep your keyboard out in front of you so your forearms rest on the desk, not your wrists.

- Avoid the low, pullout keyboards that place your wrists at an awkward angle.
- Take a break and stand up for 5 minute every 30-60 minutes.

In addition to proper posture, if you do you a lot of repetition work with your hands — such as typing on a keyboard, or doing a repetitive task on an assembly line — do regular exercises that use the muscles in your hands a different way. Something as simple as squeezing a tennis ball, or small rubber ball, 10 to 15 times, can provide stress relief to your hands as well as improving and strengthening your grip. Finger and wrist rehabilitative extension exercises are also very important to help strengthen and stabilize the wrist.

Living with Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Trying to live with carpal tunnel syndrome is not recommended. Carpal tunnel syndrome is nerve damage that will continue to get worse if left untreated. If you do not correct the underlying cause of your carpal tunnel syndrome the nerve damage will get progressively worse until you end up having to have surgery.

The good news is that carpal tunnel syndrome is not something you should have to put up with. Between chiropractic care and rehabilitative extension exercises you can become pain free, and throw that ugly wrist brace away. Our chiropractors will teach you simple steps that can be done to reduce your risk of getting carpal tunnel syndrome.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and Chiropractic Care

Many people dealing with carpal tunnel syndrome use pain medicine, wear wrist splints, or even consider surgery. As you already know, taking medicine for the pain does not deal with or correct the cause of the problem — it covers it up allowing more damage to occur. Wearing a wrist splint to immobilize the wrist attempts to allow the inflammation in the carpal tunnel to go down by restricting as much movement of the wrist as possible. However, not using your muscles will make them weaker, and more susceptible to reoccurring carpal tunnel syndrome — not to mention the fact that the wrist splint probably doesn't go well with your wardrobe! As always, surgery is a last resort. Not only it extremely expensive, but can do lasting damage to the wrist, and require extensive rehab time as well.



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The chiropractic approach is different. Chiropractors focus on finding the cause and will work to deal directly with the source of the inflammation and pressure to the median nerve. Through specific adjustments to the wrists, your chiropractor will work to restore the joints to their normal position and motion. In addition, we will be able to give you specific suggestions to improve your work environment, reducing the chance of carpal tunnel syndrome. After examining your wrists, they may also recommend a series of stretches and exercises designed to help restore proper function and movement to the wrist, reduce your carpal tunnel inflammation, and alleviate your pain.

Chiropractic care has produced excellent results for patients dealing with carpal tunnel syndrome — without resorting to drugs or surgery.

We also have several state of the art – 21 Century Therapies to help treat your pain and accelerate healing.

Call to arrange for a consultation with one of our doctors. Carpal tunnel syndrome is not to be ignored, but a condition to be corrected. If any of your friends and family can benefit from this article, please recommend this article to them.