

# CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

## What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is an ailment affecting the wrist and hand. The nerve controlling feeling and movement in the wrist and hand involved in carpal tunnel syndrome is the median nerve, which causes pain and other symptoms. Moving the hand and wrist repeatedly in the same way, such as typing, writing, and using a computer mouse, can cause CTS. Cashiers, butchers, and janitors have an increase risk of CTS. Pregnant women often get CTS because their hormones change and they retain fluid. Several illnesses, for example, muscle and bone disorders, underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism), and diabetes, can also increase risk of CTS.

## What Causes Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

In the wrist, hand and fingers, CTS causes pain, tingling, numbness, and weak grip (a tendency to drop something). Symptoms often improve when the hand is wrung or shaken. Some people feel discomfort in the upper arm and shoulder. Symptoms often worsen at night and can interfere with sleep.

## How Is Carpal tunnel Syndrome Diagnosed?

The doctor examines the wrist, and to cause symptoms, will tap it over the median nerve and will bend it and hold it there for a few seconds. Special tests (EMG) to check the wrist's nerves and muscles may also be done.

## How Is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Treated?

Treatment involves two steps. The first is a lifestyle change: stop doing whatever caused CTS. This change may be hard if it involves a job, but talk to your employer. Sometimes simple changes, such as using a wrist pad while typing so your wrist is in a better position, help. A physical therapist or occupational therapist can suggest ways to do things differently. The second step is to take pressure off the median nerve. Medicine, wrist splints, and surgery are usually used. A wrist splint at night is best, but some people wear a splint during the day. Pills give relief for a short time by decreasing inflammation. Medicine can also be injected into the wrist and can help for a longer period.

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## DOs and DON'Ts in managing Carpal Tunnel Syndrome:

- **DO** change what caused CTS.
- **DO** take pills as directed by your doctor.
- **DO** briefly take off a wrist splint, if you wear it during the day, to exercise your wrist and hand.
- **DON'T** hit things with the butt of your palm. This may injure your median nerve.
- **DON'T** delay getting treatment. If muscle wasting occurs, chances of full recovery are less.
- **DON'T** use vibrating hand tools.
- **DON'T** hold your hand or wrist in awkward positions.
- **DON'T** use repetitive movements of the hand or wrist, especially forceful grasping or pinching.
- **DON'T** use direct pressure over the palm and wrist.
- **DON'T** completely stop using and exercising your hand.

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