

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

What is it and can you help to prevent it?



What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

- Carpus comes from the Greek work *karpos*, which means “wrist.”



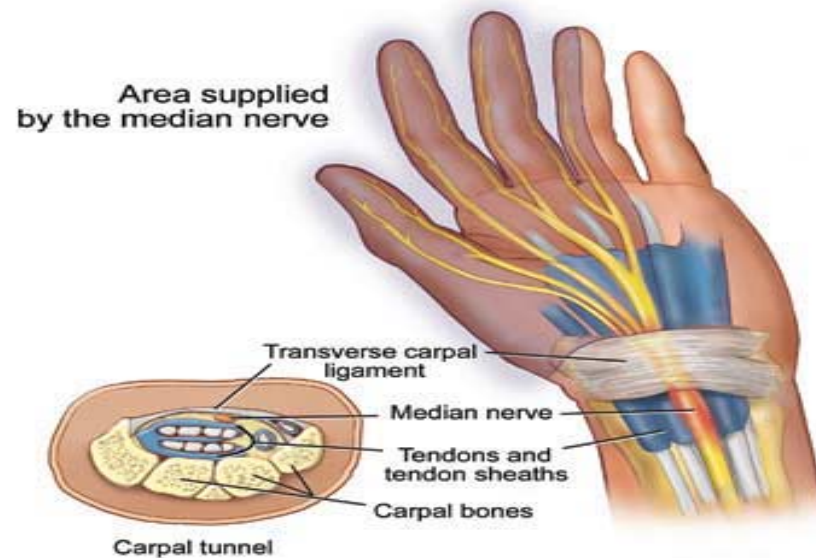
- The wrist is surrounded by a band of fibrous tissue that normally functions as a support for the joint.



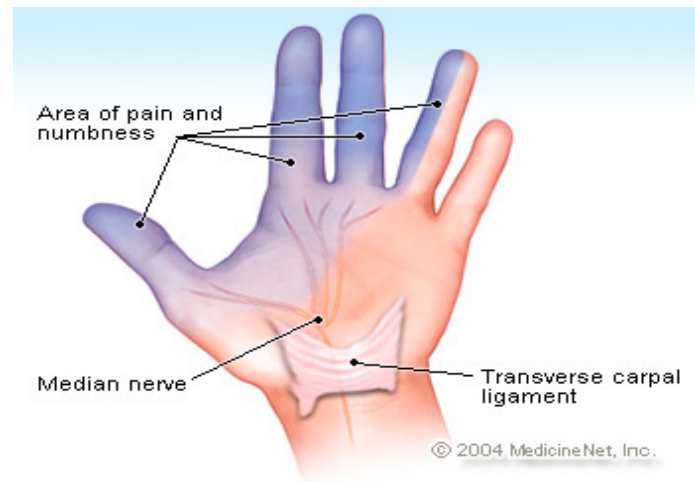
- The tight space between this fibrous band and the wrist bone is called the carpal tunnel.
- The median nerve passes through the carpal tunnel to receive sensations from the thumb, index and middle fingers of the hand.



- Any condition that causes swelling or a change in position of the tissue within the carpal tunnel can squeeze and irritate the median nerve.



- Irritation of the median nerve in this manner causes tingling and numbness of the thumb, index, and the middle fingers—a condition known as “carpal tunnel syndrome”

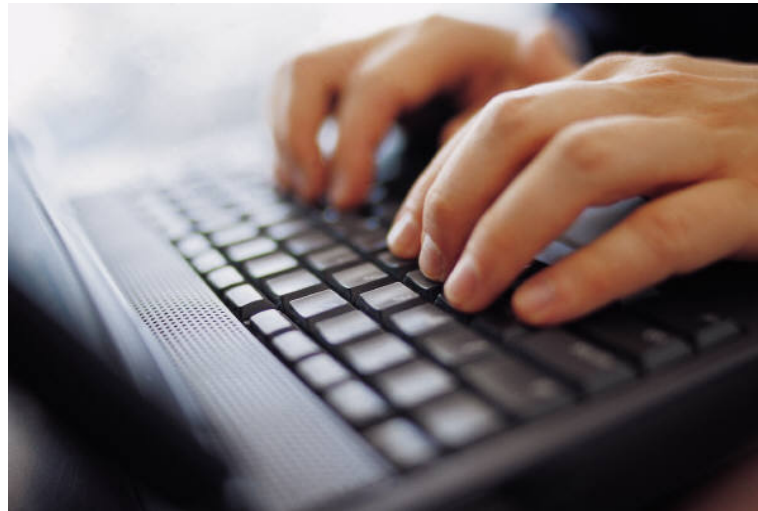


Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

What conditions and diseases cause carpal tunnel syndrome?

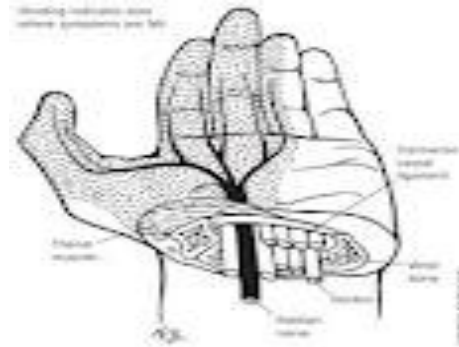
- Any condition that exerts pressure on the median nerve at the wrist
- Obesity
- Pregnancy
- Hypothyroidism
- Arthritis
- Diabetes
- Trauma

- Tendon inflammation resulting from repetitive work, such as uninterrupted typing can cause carpal tunnel symptoms. It is one of the repetitive stress injuries.



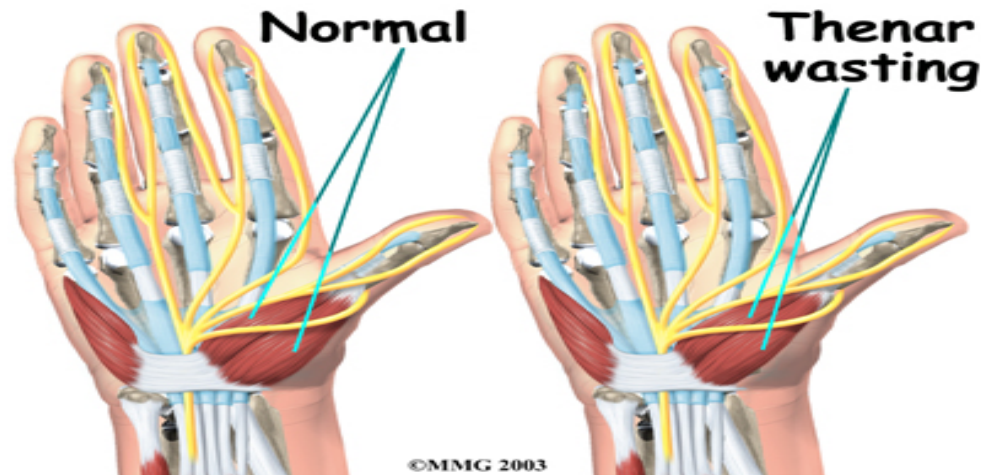
What are the symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome?

- Numbness and tingling of the hand in the distribution of the median nerve: the thumb, index, middle, and part of the fourth fingers.
- Symptoms are worse at night and can awaken people from sleep.



Chronic carpal tunnel can lead to wasting (atrophy) of the hand muscles.

- Patients can develop a burning sensation and/or cramping and weakness of the hand. Decreased grip can lead to frequent dropping of objects from the hand.



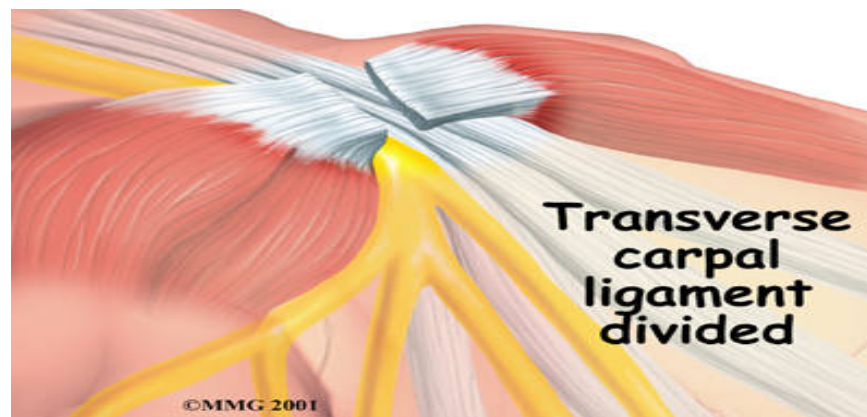
Why are symptoms worse at night?

- It is possibly because people flex their wrists at night (so some people have to wear a splint at night to keep the wrist straight).
- Or it could be due to the accumulation of fluid around the wrist and hand when lying flat.



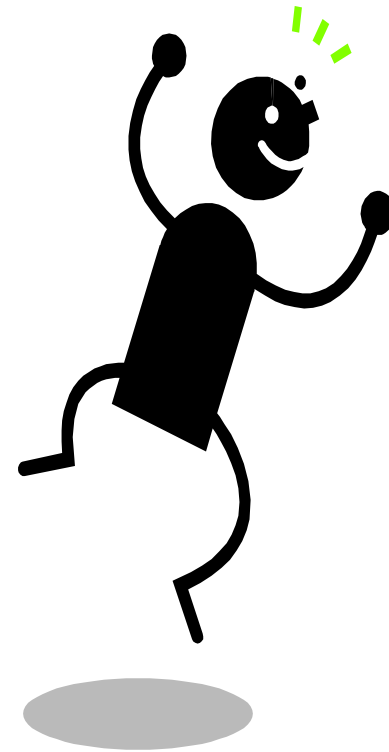
Is carpal tunnel syndrome permanent?

- It can be temporary and completely resolve.
- It can become permanent and progress.
- Some people require surgery to release the pressure on the median nerve. This is called a carpal tunnel release.



Can you do anything to reduce the risk of developing carpal tunnel syndrome?

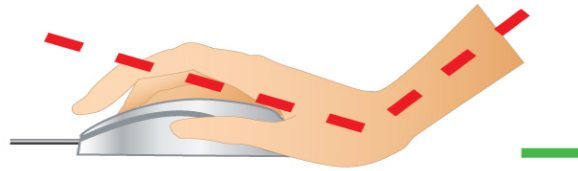
Yes you can!



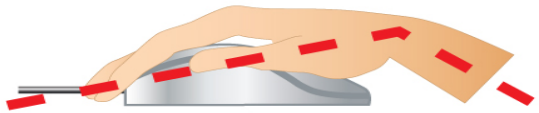
Keyboard hand position



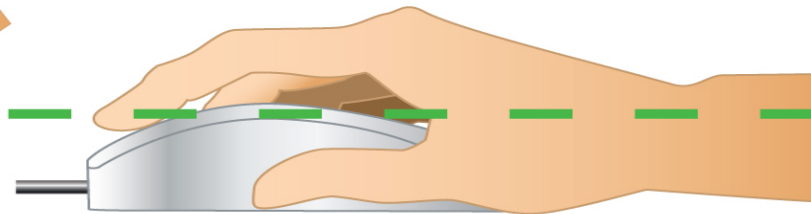
Holding the mouse



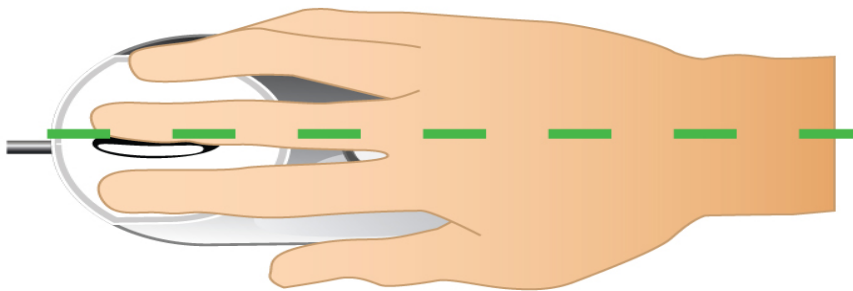
WRONG!



WRONG!



RIGHT!



RIGHT!

Exercises may reduce the risk of developing carpal tunnel syndrome

Take frequent breaks to:

- exercise wrists, fingers and hands.
- Exercise forearms which will reduce tension in the wrists.
- Stretch neck and shoulder muscles

Isometric and stretching exercises strengthen the muscles and improve blood flow

Other Helpful Hints

- Squeeze your shoulder blades together.
- Lean back in your chair
- Shake or stretch your limbs
- Take deep breaths
- Try to maintain good posture
- Remember a good chair is cheaper than treating an injury.

Light Touch

- Try to keep your hands relaxed and touch the keyboard and mouse lightly.
- Use an ergonomic keyboard that supports your wrists.

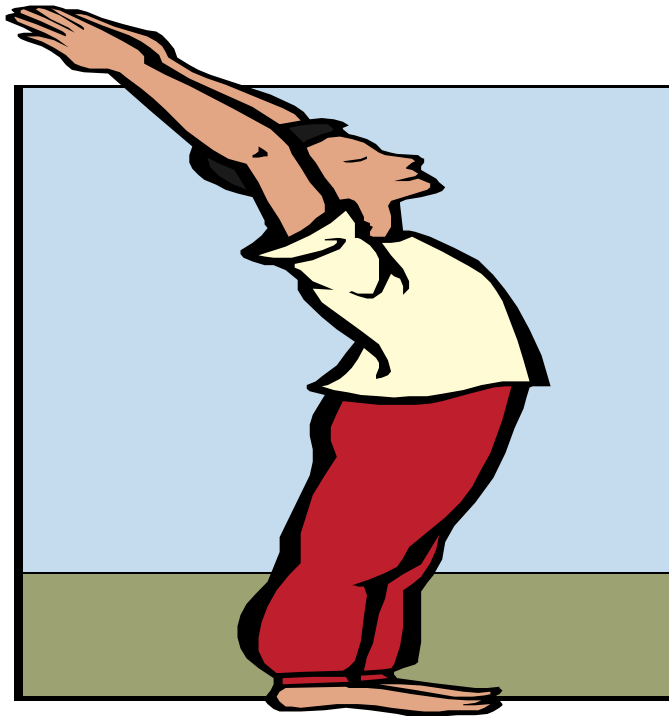


Take your mini-breaks

When we are working on a project or writing a paper, it is difficult to stop



But even short two to three minute breaks every twenty to thirty minutes can make you more productive and keep you healthier in the future.



Just do it! Take care of yourself!

