

CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME (CTS)

Women Are 3 Times More Likely Than Men to Develop CTS

The Dominant Hand is Usually Affected First and Produces the Most Severe Pain

The “carpal tunnel” is a narrow, tunnel-like structure located in the wrist. It is formed by the carpal bones and covered by a strong band of connective tissues. Located in the carpal tunnel is the median nerve which controls feeling in the palm side of the thumb, index finger and long fingers. The nerve also controls the muscles surrounding the base of the thumb and the flexor tendons.

When the tissues surrounding the flexor tendon in the wrist swell and impinge the median nerve, carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) can develop.

The following summary provides a brief overview of common causes of CTS, as well as prevention, diagnosis and treatment information.

01 | Contributing Factors

Many things can contribute to the development of carpal tunnel syndrome, including:

- Heredity
- Repetitive wrist and hand movements
- Hormonal fluctuations during pregnancy
- Age
- Certain medical conditions – diabetes, RA, lupus & hypothyroidism

02 | Symptoms

Initial symptoms may include recurring numbness or tingling, pain and stiffness in the fingers and forearm, and a “pins-and-needles” or pain sensation that awakens you from sleep. More advanced CTS can reduce strength and grip in the fingers, thumb or hand, resulting in difficulty of simple hand movements.

03 | Diagnosis and Treatment

Along with discussing symptoms and medical history, your medical provider will perform medical imaging

and testing to check for muscle weakness and numbness in the hand and thumb.

Treatment will depend on the severity of the condition. Common treatment options include wrist splinting, physical therapy, steroid and/or anti-inflammatory medications, and in advanced stages, surgery to relieve pressure on the median nerve.

04 | Prevention

There are many simple steps you can take to help prevent CTS:

- Maintain a healthy lifestyle including your weight, avoid smoking and exercise regularly
- Use correct posture
- Take frequent breaks to stretch your fingers, hands and arms
- Use ergonomically designed tools

For more information on this and other orthopedic conditions, please visit: <http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/>

Did You Know?

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome affects 4-10 million Americans

References

http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/carpal_tunnel/default_carpal_tunnel.htm

<http://www.webmd.com/pain-management/carpal-tunnel/default.htm>