

Carpal Tunnel Information & Exercise

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a condition that can happen when the median nerve is compressed or squeezed as it passes through the wrist. This happens when the carpal tunnel inside your wrist becomes inflamed.

The median nerve controls some of the muscles that move the thumb and carries information back to the brain about sensations in your thumb and fingers.





Causes

In most people the cause is not known, but it is more likely to affect women, or anyone over the age of 55. Some of the things that can increase your risk of developing carpal tunnel syndrome are:

- Genetics
- Fluid retention - Pregnancy or under active thyroid
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Obesity
- Excessive alcohol consumption (over 14 units a week)
- Previous wrist fracture or dislocation

Often caused by activities with a history of repetitive or heavy demand on wrist movements:

- Typing
- Vibrating tools
- Heavy manual work

Symptoms

The symptoms usually come on gradually over a period of weeks. It is common to experience tingling or numbness and sometimes pain. This is usually felt in the thumb, index and middle fingers but can spread further up the forearm.

It is generally worse at night and can disrupt sleep, and some people can be more aware of symptoms the morning.

It is often aggravated with static or heavy gripping of objects, such as a phone, steering wheel, typing or DIY tasks.

Some people feel better with shaking or flicking of the hand.

Sometimes the feeling of tingling and numbness can become constant and may become burning.

In worse cases weakness and wasting of the muscles in the hand or forearm can lead to clumsiness, loss of grip, pinch strength and dropping things.

The condition often resolves within 6 months with conservative management.

Activity Modification

Avoid or modify activities that cause your wrist/hand to be painful, try to find different ways of doing these activities. For example:

- Shift or slide heavy objects rather than lift them
- Use a pen grip to increase the size of your grip
- Ergonomic Mouse/Keyboards
- Avoid sustained gripping activities

Splints

Splints are designed to be worn when performing tasks that aggravate your symptoms. These can be bought from most pharmacies or the internet.

A splint can also be worn for comfort and may help to settle symptoms. Sometimes with Carpal Tunnel it is helpful to wear them while sleeping overnight.



Corticosteroid injection

If your symptoms are not improving after 3 months of trying the previous advice, your pain is severe and constant, you have no sensation deficit or loss of strength then a corticosteroid injection may be considered.

Surgery

Surgery will be considered if you have had Nerve Conduction Studies that show severe nerve damage, you have severe and constant pain, and progressive loss of sensation, weakness and muscle wasting.

Further information

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/carpal-tunnel-syndrome/>



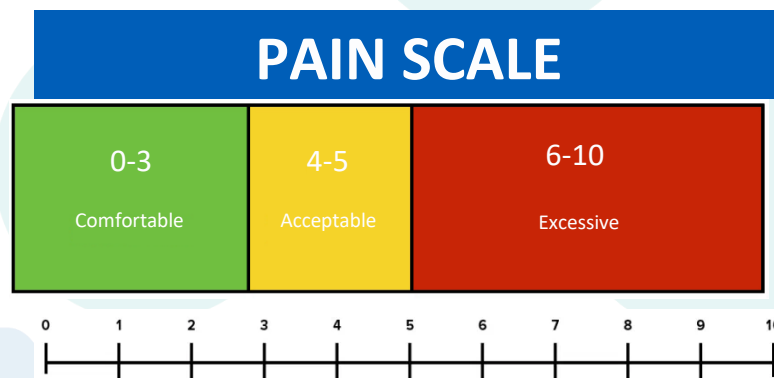
Exercise

Pain during exercises should be manageable. Aim to stay within the green and amber zones. If experiencing excessive pain then you can modify the exercise, and then slowly build it back up over time;

- Reduce the range of movement
- Reduce repetitions
- Reduce the resistance/weight being used
- Slower, less intensity and control the movement more
- Increase the rest between each set of exercises

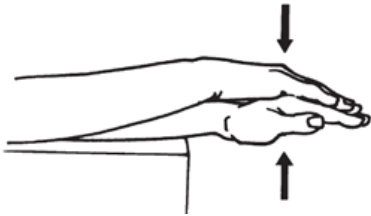
Progress onto the next stage of exercise once they become easier and you can fully complete the exercises in the comfortable zone of the pain scale.

- Pain after exercise should settle to your pre-exercise levels within 30-60 minutes.
- Pain or stiffness due to exercise in the next morning should not last longer than 60 minutes.
- Use your pain relief, ice/heat or anything else you have found that eases your symptoms to help manage.





Isometric Wrist Extension



Resist your fingers into extension until you feel a tension using the opposite hand to resist against, hold the pressure. Relax and repeat.

Hold for 5-10 seconds | Repeat 3-4 times | Perform 1 times daily.

Wrist Flexion Stretch

Use your hand to bend your own wrist. Make sure you keep your wrist relaxed and elbow straight.

Hold for 20-30 seconds | Repeat 3 times | Perform 1 times daily



Wrist Extension Stretch

Use your hand to extend your own wrist. Make sure you keep your wrist relaxed and elbow straight.

Hold for 20-30 seconds | Repeat 3 times | Perform 1 times daily

