

Carpal Tunnel

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common, painful and sometimes disabling condition of the hand and wrist. Symptoms can include pain and pins-and-needles in the thumb, index and middle fingers. Night pain and discomfort are common and more severe cases may cause weakness in the hand muscles making it difficult to grip.

Causes of carpal tunnel

Carpal tunnel syndrome can be difficult to diagnose because other conditions can cause similar symptoms (e.g., tendonitis, neck pain). Symptoms start when the median nerve gets squeezed as it runs through the wrist's carpal tunnel. The carpal tunnel is a narrow tunnel just big enough to fit all the tendons, nerves and blood vessels that run into your hand. Postures or conditions that narrow or use extra space in the tunnel can squeeze the median nerve. Many factors can cause this narrowing (reduced space) and often a single specific cause is difficult to identify. It may be caused by a combination of:

- Swelling (e.g., inflammatory arthritis, tendonitis, thyroid conditions, pregnancy, hormonal conditions)
- Body factors (e.g., excess body fat, a wrist fracture, genetics)
- Postures or physical activities (e.g., forceful gripping, working with awkward wrist postures, exposure to vibrating hand tools)

How physiotherapists help

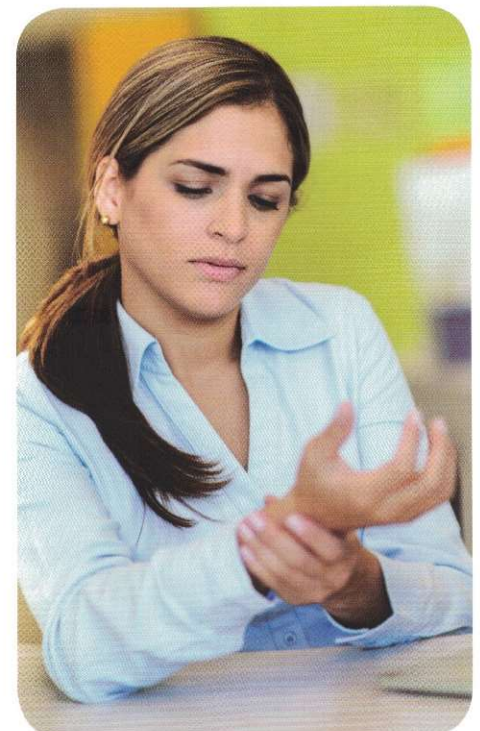
Physiotherapists are highly skilled at assessing and treating people with carpal tunnel. Physiotherapists can make sure the problem is from your carpal tunnel and will examine your neck, shoulder, wrist and hand.

Effective treatment requires an accurate diagnosis and understanding the underlying causes. Physiotherapists can:

- Help reduce pressure or inflammation, pain and weakness in your hand, wrist or arm
- Determine if a wrist brace is appropriate
- Provide a specific program to improve function and get you using your wrist
- Teach you effective stretching exercises to prevent or minimize future flare-ups
- Provide specific advice on returning to work and/or normal activities

Your physiotherapist will:

- Assess and determine if your symptoms are caused by median nerve dysfunction
- Help identify if the things you are doing at work or home contribute to the symptoms
- Work with your doctor if medical testing is needed



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