

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

**Hand Therapy Services
Community & Therapy Services**

This leaflet has been designed to give you important information about your condition and to answer some common queries you may have.



Information for patients and visitors

Introduction

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a condition which causes pain or aching, tingling or numbness in the affected hand.

This booklet explains more about the condition, possible causes and treatments.

What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) is a common condition in which a nerve is squeezed as it passes through a tunnel in the wrist.

The tunnel is formed by a thick ligament which crosses over the wrist bones (Carpals).

The nerve is called the Median nerve and it controls some of the thumb muscles, and feeds back about sensation in the hand, particularly thumb, index and middle fingers as well as part of the ring finger.

This tunnel is tightly packed with the tendons or guiders which help the fingers make a fist so there isn't a great deal of spare space.

If there is swelling or inflammation in the tunnel, the nerve becomes compressed and causes the symptoms known as Carpal Tunnel Syndrome.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms tend to be worse at night as we bend the wrist unknowingly during sleep, but can occur during the day. They can include:

- Pain, aching, tingling, numbness in the affected hand
- Symptoms in the thumb, index and middle fingers although sometimes it can feel as though all of the hand is affected and swollen or stiff
- Aching in the forearm or shoulder

What causes it?

Possible causes include:

- Any form of arthritis affecting the wrist / thumb areas
- Hormonal changes
- Underactive thyroid gland
- Diabetes
- Strenuous / overuse of hand / wrist
- Physical changes in the wrist / hand



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What treatments are there?

There are several forms of treatment depending on the severity of the problem.

Initially your therapist will fully assess your hand and establish if there are specific causes which can also be treated.

Usually it will be suggested you use a splint to prevent your wrist from bending when you are asleep as this will compress the nerve even more.

Your therapist may advise you to use the splint at other times and will also advise you on how to avoid stressing the nerve, as well as giving you some specific exercises to complete

Sometimes a local injection of steroid around the area of the carpal tunnel can help relieve the symptoms.

In severe cases your doctor may refer you for surgery where the ligament which helps form the tunnel is divided to release the pressure.



Splinting

Your splint is meant to prevent your wrist from bending and compressing the nerve.

You should wear your splint

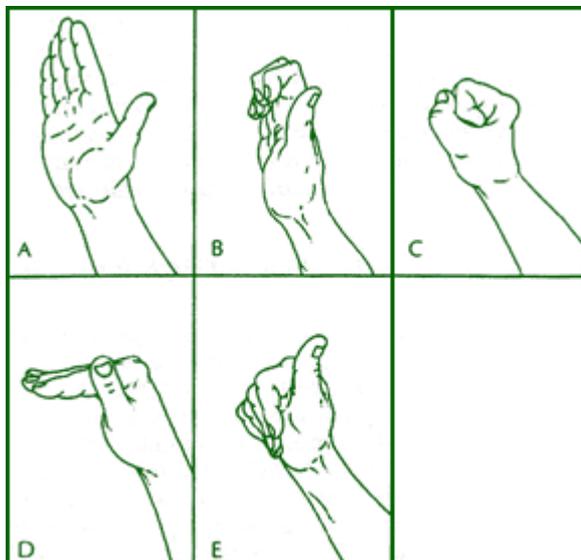
AT NIGHT / DURING ACTIVITY IN THE DAY*

Your splint can be washed in warm soapy water, rinsed and dried well. It is important to wash regularly for hygiene purposes.

Information for patients and visitors

Exercises

The following exercises should be completed 2-3 times a day, 5 repetitions of each.



A – Start with the fingers stretched out

B – Curl the fingers so the tips of your fingers are touching the pulp of your hand

C – Curl into a full fist

D – Bend the fingers from the big knuckle joints only keeping the fingers themselves straight

E – Continue into a fist

Do your exercises SLOWLY and PURPOSEFULLY for full benefit. DO NOT rush them.

Avoiding Aggravating Activities

Any activities where you are repeatedly bending your wrist down will continue to aggravate CTS.

Whenever you are carrying out an activity which made your symptoms worse, pause and look at your wrist position – it may well be flexed.

Where possible try to maintain a neutral wrist position where it is just straight.

It may help to make minor adjustments such as lowering your ironing board and steering wheel if you find your wrists are consistently bent.

If you use mouse a lot with computer work consider purchasing an ergonomic / vertical mouse as this has been shown to help.

By following these instructions it is hoped to reduce your symptoms significantly.

Your therapist will be happy to discuss any specific questions you may have.

Information for patients and visitors

Contact Details for Further Information

Your Therapist is: _____

Contact number: _____

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service offers confidential advice, support and information on any health related matters.

If you have a comment, concern, complaint or compliment about the care or service you have received from the Trust you can contact the PALS team as follows:

Telephone: 03033 306518

Email: nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

There are also offices at both the Diana Princess of Wales Hospital (near the main entrance) and Scunthorpe General Hospital (on the C Floor, near the outpatient department), should you wish to visit.

Please note: PALS should not be contacted for clinical advice relating to the content of this leaflet. The service should be contacted directly in the first instance.

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