

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Hand Therapy Patient Information

What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome occurs when a nerve (the **Median Nerve**) is compressed at the wrist, as it travels through the Carpal Tunnel.

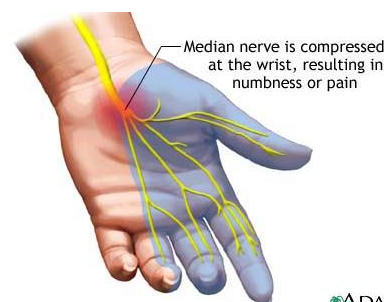
What are the symptoms?

- An ache or pain in your arm or hand, in particular the thumb, index, middle and half of the ring finger
- Pins and needles, tingling and/or numbness in the same areas are often worse when the wrist is flexed (bent forward) or raised for a period of time. It may wake you at night with the feeling you need to shake the hand.
- Weakness in pinch or grip

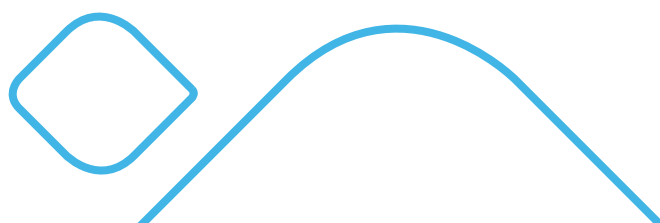
What is the cause?

Compression of the median nerve, one of the 3 main nerves that supplies the hand. Over time, inflammation and thickening of the Transverse Carpal Ligament can occur. This can be due to:

- Swelling or fluid retention
- Following trauma or bony injury in the area causing narrowing to the tunnel where the nerve passes
- Overuse
- Hormonal changes e.g. during pregnancy



ADAM.





How can I manage my symptoms?

- Support with a wrist splint, particularly when using your hand or at night
- Limit sustained pressure to the palm and wrist
- Take regular breaks from repetitive tasks and other activities that cause your symptoms
- Hanging your hand/arm over the edge of the bed can help settle symptoms at night
- Alternate which hand you use for your tasks

Surgery - Carpal Tunnel Decompression

Surgery can be performed to decompress the Carpal Tunnel by releasing a ligament in your wrist. This creates more space for the nerve and allowing it to recover from the compression.

Post-Operation Management

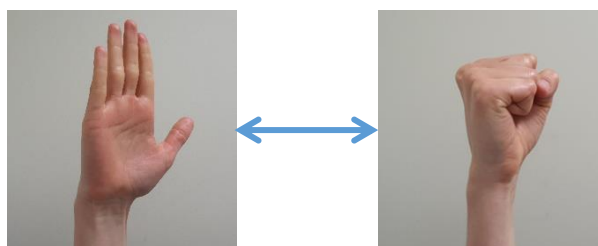
- After surgery you may be given a splint to support the wrist.
- Raise the hand (to heart height) to help reduce swelling. Compression gloves can sometimes be used to help manage swelling.
- Begin massaging the scar (see 'Rehab Tips').
- During the first 4-6 weeks, avoid weight-bearing on a flat hand and forceful gripping.



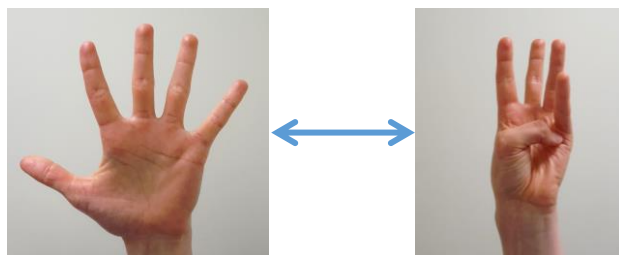
Exercises

Remove your splint to complete the exercises below 3-4 times per day

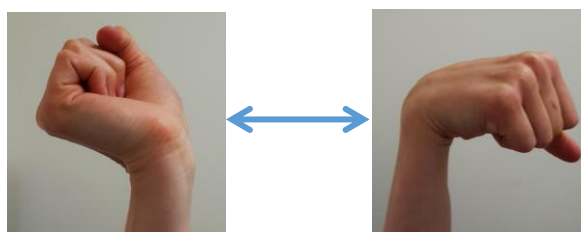
1. Start with your fingers and wrist straight. Gently curl your fingertips towards your palm to make a fist, keeping your wrist straight. Then straighten up again. Repeat 10 times



2. Touch each fingertip with your thumb, slide down the little finger and straighten up.



3. Gently let your wrist drop forwards and backwards, within pain limits. Keep your fingers relaxed. Repeat 10 times.



4. Start with your elbow by your side and at a right angle. Keeping your fingers relaxed and wrist straight, turn your palm down towards the floor and then up towards the ceiling.





Rehab tips for your hand and wrist

1. Warm Water Exercises

Ensure all wounds or pin sites have healed. Submerge the affected hand/arm in warm water for up to 5 minutes and practice the exercises above.

2. Scar Massage

Once your wounds are closed and dry your therapist will teach you to massage your scar. This will help soften the scar, prevent it sticking to the tissue beneath, decrease scar sensitivity, decrease swelling and improve movement.

Rub the scar and surrounding area for 3-5 minutes, approximately 4 times per day. You can use moisturising cream, but only if all wounds are closed.

3. Sensory Exercises

If you develop increased sensitivity (hypersensitivity), sensory exercise will help settle this.

- Use different textures/materials to rub over the areas that are sensitive for 2-3 minutes each. Aim to use 10 different textures per day.
- Using a bowl of dry rice, spend 10 minutes grasping the rice and working it between your fingers.

4. If splints are provided wear them as directed by your therapist. This may be full time **or** at night and at risk.

5. If you have any unhealed wounds, monitor for signs of infection (redness, hot, swollen, pain, discharge from the wound or feeling feverish). If you have any of these signs then visit your GP or A&E.

If you have any problems, please contact your therapist. Contact details are below.

Hand Therapy

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01225 821241 | www.ruh.nhs.uk

Please contact the Patient Support and Complaints Team (PSCT) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital.

Email ruh-tr.psct@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.