

CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME



BAYSIDE
HAND THERAPY
Rehabilitation of the Hand, Wrist and Elbow

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FACT SHEET

WHAT IS CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME?

Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is a condition where the median nerve becomes compressed within the carpal tunnel at the front of the wrist. A person with CTS experiences pins and needles and/or numbness in the thumb, index and middle fingers. Symptoms are typically worse at night or on waking in the morning. If the condition becomes very severe it may cause the muscles around the thumb to become weak.

WHAT CAUSES CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME?

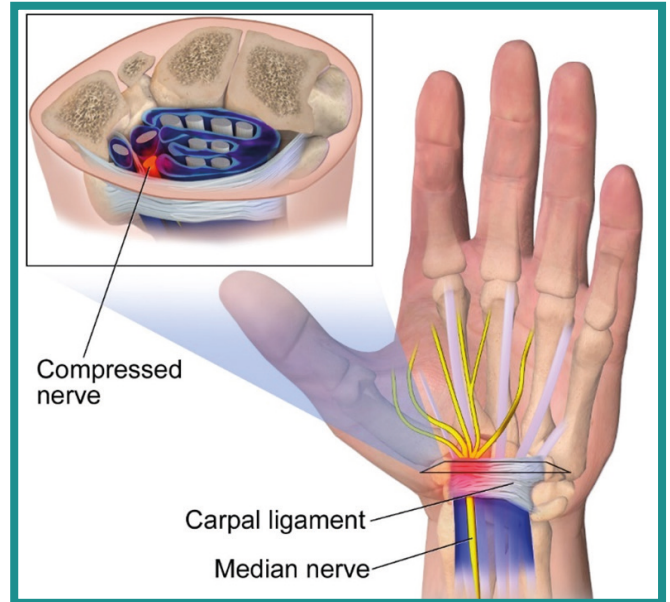
Although the exact cause of CTS is often unknown, contributing factors include highly repetitive wrist and hand movements, and conditions which cause swelling at the wrist such as arthritis, wrist fractures and pregnancy. Other factors which have been shown to be associated with CTS include diabetes, thyroid problems, obesity and rheumatoid arthritis.

HOW IS CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME DIAGNOSED?

Your doctor or hand therapist can diagnose CTS using a series of clinical tests. To assess whether surgery is needed, you may be referred for Nerve Conduction Studies.



Custom Made Carpal Tunnel Splint



Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

HOW IS CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME TREATED?

Hand therapy can be very effective in reducing the severity of symptoms and delaying the need for surgery. Hand therapy treatment includes wearing a wrist splint at night which reduces compression of the nerve. Your therapist will also teach you exercises to improve gliding of the nerve through the carpal tunnel and will recommend ways to modify your activities to reduce pressure on the nerve.

If you experience swelling, you may be fitted with a compression glove to reduce swelling in the hand over night. Results of conservative treatment are best if the symptoms are mild or have not been present for an extended period. More chronic and severe cases may require surgery to release the Transverse Carpal Ligament to relieve pressure on the nerve.