

Symptoms of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Carpal tunnel syndrome is one of the most common forms of musculoskeletal disorders of the workplace. It can occur in the workplace or during some leisure activities. Carpal tunnel syndrome can also occur in people with diabetes or thyroid disease, and during a pregnancy.

If you have any of these symptoms you may have carpal tunnel syndrome:

- Pain, tingling or numbness in the thumb, index, middle or ring fingers.
- Tingling or numbness of your entire hand.
- Pain that shoots from your hands up the arm as far as the shoulder.
- A swollen or tight feeling in your hands or wrists.

Sometimes you may also notice that:

- One or more of the above symptoms are worse at night or when you first get up in the morning.
- Your hands or lower arms feel weak in the morning.
- You may drop objects you are holding more than usual.
- You may have trouble pinching or grasping onto objects or you fumble with small objects.
- You may have trouble performing detail tasks such as writing or tying your shoes.
- You may have trouble performing tasks that require strength such as opening a sealed jar or using a screwdriver on a tight screw.

Usually the first symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome are slight and infrequent. Excessive use of the hand for specific tasks such as typing can aggravate these symptoms, but once the hand and wrist are rested there may be no symptoms at all. As the use of the hand or wrist increases with repetitive tasks, the symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome worsen.

Treatment

Treatment of carpal tunnel syndrome by a physical medicine and rehabilitation physician can be simple or complex, depending on the severity and frequency of symptoms. Treatments can include physical therapy, stretching, special braces or splints, ice, strengthening exercises, anti-inflammatory medications, or cortisone injection. Surgery is normally a last resort for patients who do not respond to conservative treatments. Early diagnosis and treatment greatly improves chances for successful recovery.

Prevention

Taking the following steps when working at a computer, typewriter, or other key-operated equipment can decrease your risk for developing injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome:

- **Sit Up Straight**
Good ergonomic posture and positioning are the best defense against developing Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. Avoid slouching! Sitting in a more upright position puts less weight and pressure on hands and wrists. Your lower back should be pressed against the seat back with the spine straight and perpendicular to the floor. Hips and knees should be bent at a 90-degree angle, and feet should be flat on the floor or supported by a footrest.
- **Take A Break**
Take a 20-30 second break every half-hour to stretch the muscles in your hands, forearms, and shoulders.
- **Straighten Out Your Wrists**
Don't rest your palms or heel of your hand on your desk when typing or using the mouse. Try to keep your hands held up with wrists in a straight position. A wrist rest for your keyboard can be effective in keeping your wrists in the proper position.

Cited from: aaPM&R – American Academy of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

Call 316-613-4756 to schedule an appointment at any of these 3 convenient locations

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Newton | 720 Medical Center Drive