

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Self-care to help your symptoms

This handout gives tips to take pressure off the carpal tunnel in your wrist. This may help reduce tingling, numbness, and pain.

What causes carpal tunnel syndrome?

A nerve and several tendons pass through a small space in your wrist. This space is called the *carpal tunnel*.

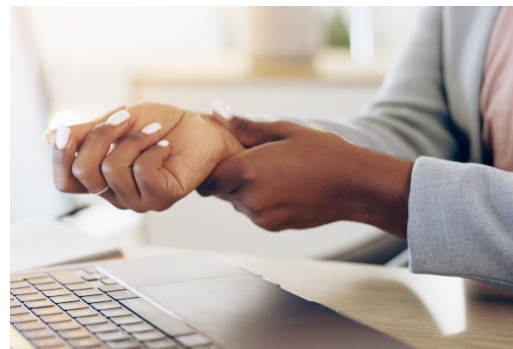
The *median nerve* travels from your arm to your hand and fingers. The tendons help you bend your fingers and make a fist.

An injury or health problem can make the space in the tunnel smaller. This can put pressure on the nerve and cause tingling, numbness, and pain.

What can help my symptoms?

What Not to Do

- Do **not** bend your wrist too far forward or backward.
- Do **not** put a lot of pressure on your flat hand. Avoid:
 - Pushing a heavy box or piece of furniture
 - Leaning on a table or chair with your hand
- Do **not** grip things tightly for a long time. This includes:
 - Carrying a suitcase, a bucket, or grocery bags
 - Sweeping, vacuuming, raking, or mowing
 - Holding a steering wheel
 - Holding a paintbrush, pen, or pencil
 - Holding a newspaper or book in front of you
- Do **not** pinch your fingers together for a long time. For example, writing or sewing by hand.
- Do **not** repeat the same wrist movement over and over. This includes:
 - Using a hammer, screwdriver, or other tools
 - Crocheting or knitting
 - Raking or sweeping
 - Using vibrating tools, such as a power drill
 - Playing some musical instruments. Ask your occupational therapist first.
 - Typing or using a computer mouse



Making small changes can help reduce your carpal tunnel symptoms.



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What to Do

- Keep your wrists straight as much as you can. Wearing wrist splints during the day and night can help.
- Take breaks often.
- Do the exercises your occupational therapist taught you.
- Notice when you are gripping or pinching too tightly. Try to relax your hand.
- Use tools and objects with larger handles when possible.
- Use both hands to lift and carry things.
- Keep things close to your body when you lift or carry them.
- Exercise and do other activities that help lower stress.
- It is okay to say, “No, I can’t do that.”

Can carpal tunnel syndrome be treated?

Surgery is one treatment for carpal tunnel syndrome. Hand and wrist exercises can also help your symptoms. Your provider will teach you the exercises and tell you how often to do them.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.