

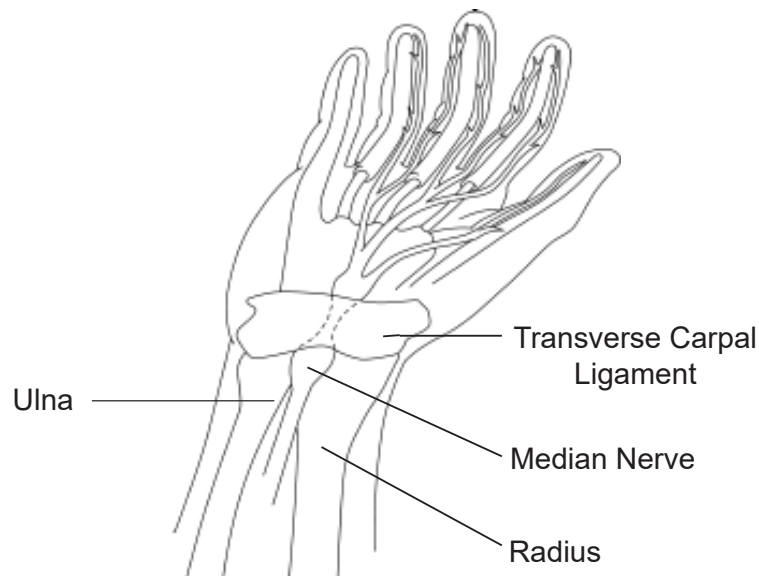
Physiotherapy Department

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome during and after Pregnancy

What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

Your carpal tunnel is a channel at the wrist that runs between the bones and a strong band of connective tissue. Within this tunnel you have blood vessels, the median nerve and several tendons that help you move your fingers and wrist.

When the median nerve that runs through this channel is compressed it may result in carpal tunnel syndrome.



What are the symptoms?

- Carpal tunnel syndrome is often described as a pain, aching, tingling sensation, numbness and/or a burning sensation in the hand, thumb or fingers.
- You may notice that your hand appears swollen.
- Occasionally people feel they are clumsy or weak in the affected arm.
- Symptoms are commonly said to be worse at night or first thing in the morning.
- Symptoms may be provoked by activities that involve gripping an object ie. a mobile telephone or newspaper.
- Symptoms vary and can range from mild to very painful and may affect both hands.

Why does carpal tunnel syndrome occur in pregnancy?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is very common during pregnancy because of an increase in fluid retention. This fluid sits within the carpal tunnel and compresses the median nerve. It is more common to experience symptoms in the 3rd trimester.

How long will the symptoms last?

Most cases of carpal tunnel syndrome will settle within 3 months after the baby is born. If symptoms persist for longer or you are struggling to care for your new baby then you should seek further advice from either your women's health physiotherapist or your GP.

Will carpal tunnel effect my baby?

No, your baby is not affected by carpal tunnel

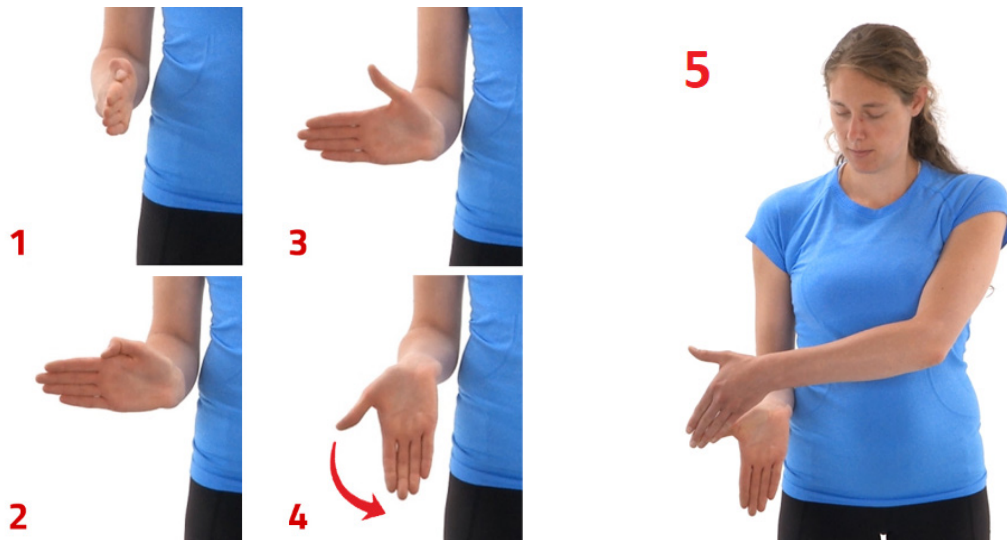
How can I help relieve the symptoms?

Carpal tunnel syndrome tends to persist throughout pregnancy but there are things that you can do to relieve the symptoms.

Things that can help relieve the symptoms:

- **Cold and Heat** - The use of heat can help with pain and muscle relaxation. Use a warm water bottle, or microwavable wheat bag, following the instructions provided when you purchased it. To protect your skin from heat burns, wrap the item in a few layers of towel. Leave in place for 10-15 minutes. It can be reapplied after 2 hours if you wish.
The use of ice can help with pain and inflammation. Use crushed ice cubes or a bag of frozen peas. To reduce the risk of developing an ice burn place the ice pack in a wet towel. Leave in place for 10-15 minutes. It can be reapplied after 2 hours if you wish.
It is normal for the skin to become pink with either heat or ice packs, however, if you experience discomfort or burning sensation remove the item immediately. Do not apply heat or ice packs if you have poor skin sensation or poor circulation, if you are diabetic or over areas of infection.
- **Rest** - Overuse of the affected hand can often result in an increase in your symptoms. Try and avoid lifting/carrying and repetitive actions. Putting weight through the palm of your hand should be avoided, this may occur for example when you are on your hands and knees playing with a toddler. Activities such as shopping and typing may aggravate the problem. Try and find alternatives such as online shopping or ask for help from others. If you cannot avoid a certain activity then try and take regular breaks to rest your hand and wrist.
- **Wrist Splint** - You may find that a wrist splint worn at night and whilst completing aggravating activities may aid in reducing your symptoms.
- **Elevation** - When resting your hand it is a good idea to have your hand rested higher than your shoulder. This can be done by resting your arm under a pillow or two on the arm on a sofa. This will help to drain any swelling away from the hand and wrists.
- **Movement** - Try moving or shaking your hands until the pain / tingling reduces.
- **Posture** - The median nerve run all the way down to your wrist from your neck so maintaining a good posture at the neck, shoulders and upper back is important. Avoid being round shouldered and poking your chin forward. Avoid activities that force your wrists into a bent forwards or backwards position.
- **Nerve and Tendon Gliding Exercises** - Exercises that improve the glide of the median nerve and tendons through the carpal tunnel may benefit in some cases. *See exercises on next page.*

Nerve Glides for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome



Begin with your elbow bent by your side, your hand in a soft fist, and your forearm neutral so your thumb is facing up.

1. Open your fingers straight.
2. Extend your wrist back.
3. Spread and straighten your thumb.
4. Keep your wrist and hand in this position and rotate your palm up.
5. Then use your other hand to **gently** stretch your thumb back straight.

Hold a few seconds then release and relax. Repeat the sequence 5 times. Do this 3 times a day. You may feel a mild tingle or stretch that should go away once stopping the exercise.

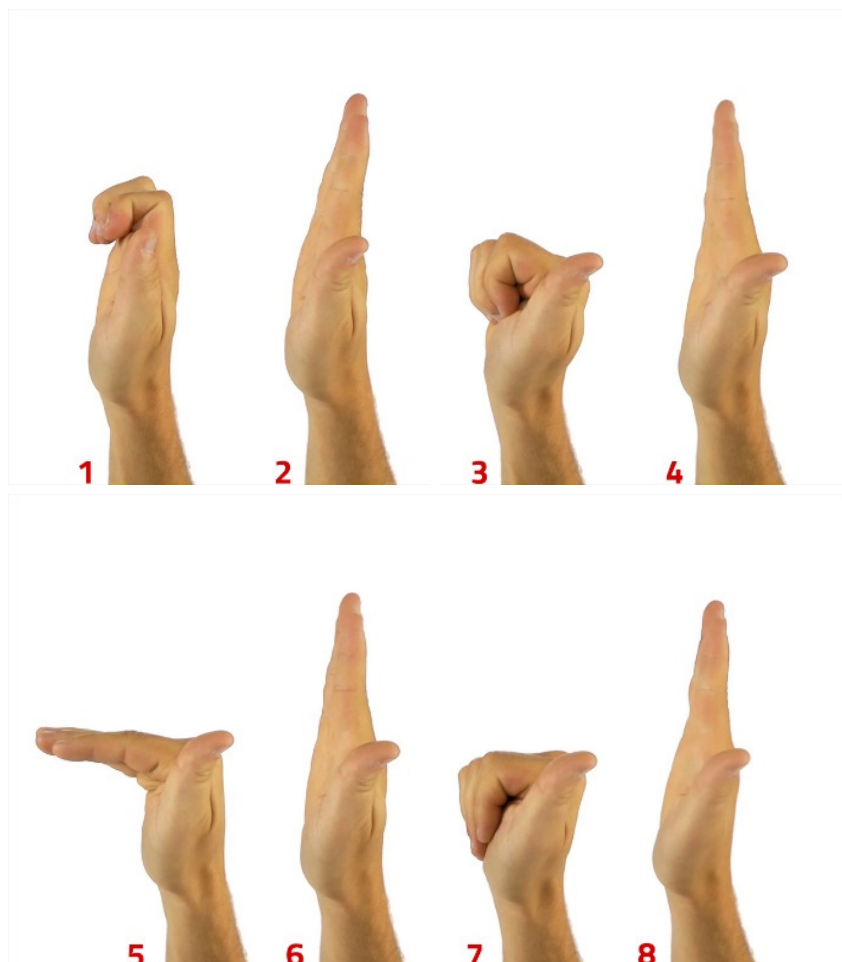


Sit up straight. Look straight forward and lift your arm out to the side up to 90 degrees if possible with your elbow bent also.

1. Spread your fingers apart as much as you can. Hold 2 seconds.
2. Relax your fingers.

Repeat this sequence 10 times. Do this 3 times a day.

Tendon Glides for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome



Start with your hand and fingers straight and in line with your forearm. Without moving your wrist, do the following movements and reset your fingers to the starting position between each:

- Flex the two last knuckles of all your fingers (position 1)
- Curl your fingers to form a fist (without the thumb) (position 3)
- Flex your largest knuckle joints only to form an angle of 90 degrees between your fingers and your hand (position 5)
- Flex the fingers straight to form a 90 degree angle with the hand, then flex the middle knuckles so the tip of your fingers come straight in the palm of the hand without the smallest knuckles bending (position 7)

Repeat this sequence 5 times. Do this 3 times a day.

Web Address

<http://www.cht.nhs.uk/services/clinical-services/physiotherapy-outpatients/patient-careinformation/>

QR Code



If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Physiotherapy Department
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary
Telephone: 01484 342434

MSK Physiotherapy Admin Office
Telephone: 01484 905380

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ یا زبان میں درکار ہوں، تو
برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مغاير أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم المذكور أعلاه"