

# Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

The 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 runs through this tunnel, it can be compressed and may result in carpal tunnel syndrome.

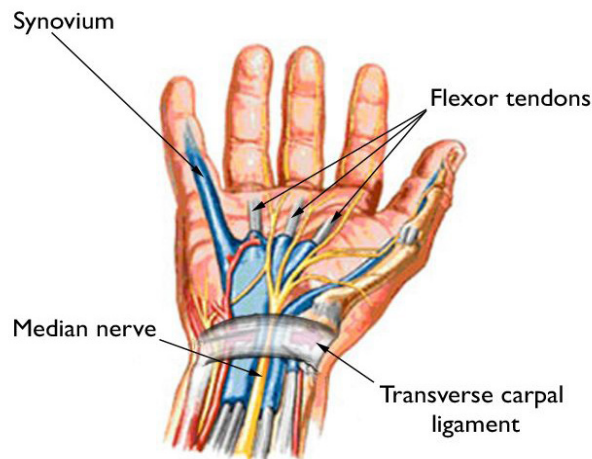


Diagram with the permission of American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS)

## Who gets it?

- It is more common in females than males
- It is more common in people who are obese
- It is more common during pregnancy
- It is more common in people with diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and thyroid problems
- It may be associated with swelling in the tunnel which may be caused by inflammation of the tendons, a fracture of the wrist, wrist arthritis and other less common conditions

## What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome include pain, a tingling sensation, numbness and/or a burning sensation in the hand or fingers. It is unusual for the little finger to be involved.
- 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, i.e. a mobile telephone or newspaper.
- In the early stages, numbness and tingling may come and go and sensation should return to normal.
- If the condition worsens, the altered sensation may become continuous.
- You may also notice loss of muscle bulk around the base of the thumb on the palm and some hand weakness.
- In some cases, nerve conduction tests are needed to confirm the diagnosis.

## Things that can help relieve the symptoms:

**General Measures** – Try not to overuse your wrist by excessive squeezing, gripping, wringing etc. Overuse of the affected hand can often result in an increase in your symptoms. Try and avoid heavy lifting/carrying and repetitive actions. Putting weight through the palm of your hand should be avoided. Carpal tunnel syndrome in pregnancy normally resolves after the baby is born.

**Wrist Splint** – A removable wrist splint for night time is often advised. The aim of the splint is to keep the wrist at a neutral angle to reduce pressure on the nerve. You may find consistently wearing the splint at night for up to three months will give you some relief.

### **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 page 3

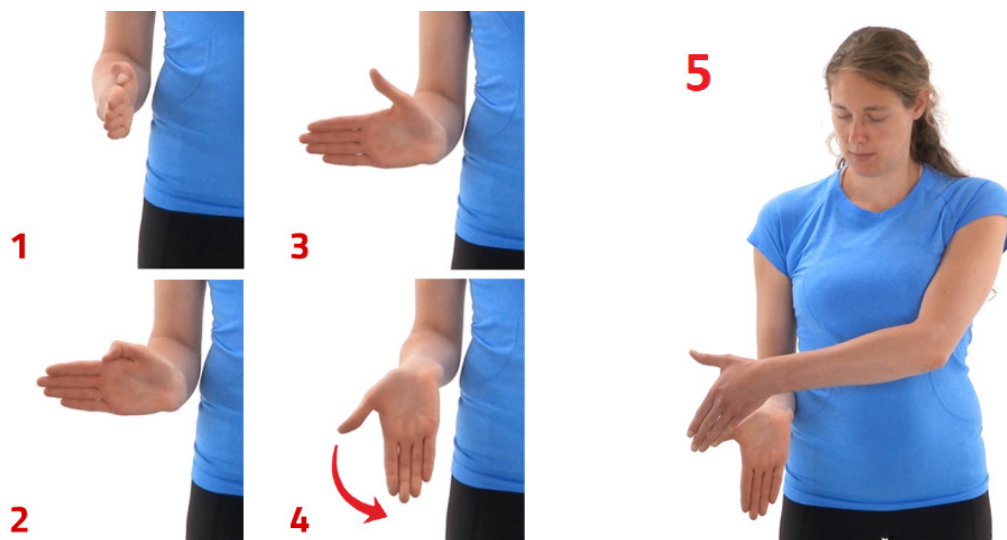
**Steroid Injection** – An injection into the carpal tunnel may be an option.

**Surgery** – A surgical option may be indicated in severe cases. A small cut is made on the palm of your hand, cutting the tight ligament (the flexor retinaculum) that forms the roof of the carpal tunnel. This stops the nerve being compressed. Symptoms may continue to improve for up to 6 months. Surgery is usually safe and effective but complications may occur. You will need to know about these complications to help you make an informed decision about surgery. The surgery will be performed under local anaesthesia.

## When to return to clinic

If your numbness, pins and needles or pain become constant or you have any visible wasting or weakness of the muscles at the base of the thumb you should return to your GP or MSK Team for further advice.

## 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.

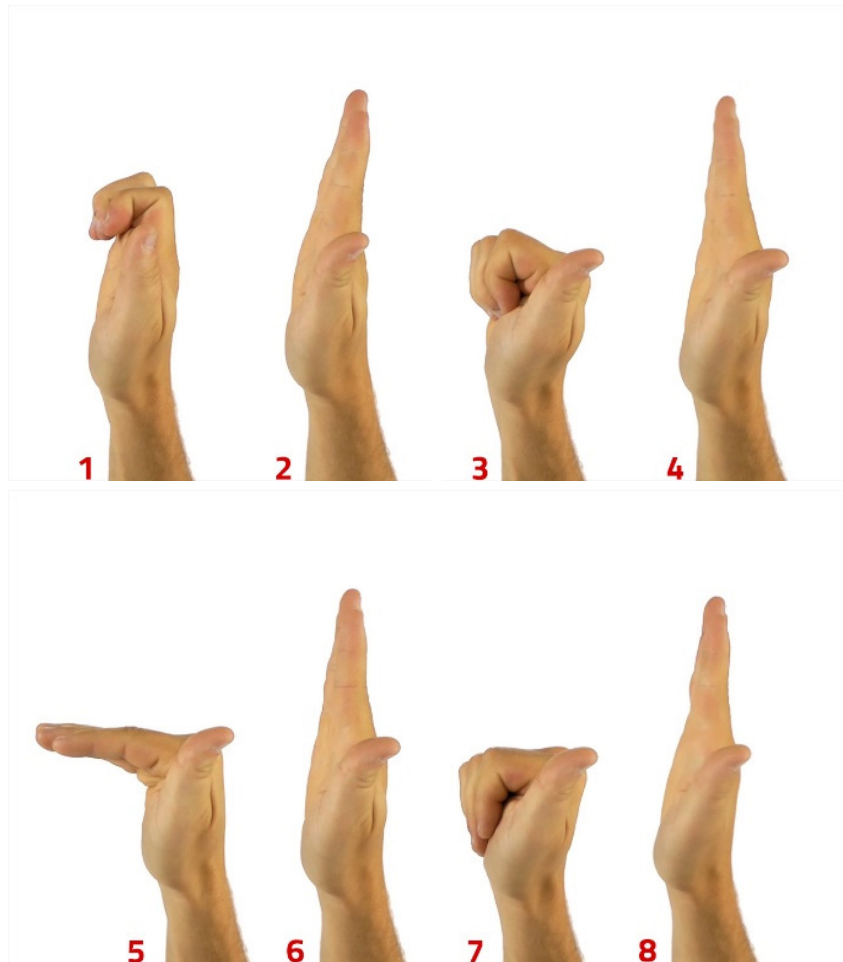


Sit up straight. Look straight forward and lift your arm out to the side up to 90 degrees if possible with your elbow bent also.

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.

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

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