

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Information for Patients



This leaflet has been written to give you the right information about carpal tunnel syndrome and what you can do to help with your recovery.

What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a collection of symptoms associated with the irritation of one of the main nerves that goes into your hand.

What causes carpal tunnel syndrome?

In many cases, carpal tunnel syndrome will start for no obvious reason, however there are certain factors that may raise the chances of you developing an issue:

- If you are pregnant
- If you are overweight
- If you are diabetic
- If you have had an injury to your wrist

What are the common symptoms?

Pins and needles/numbness: The most common symptoms are pins and needles or numbness. Typically, you will feel this in your thumb, index, middle and part of your ring finger.

For most people, these symptoms will appear at night, or if you are holding your hand in one position such as driving or typing.

Pain: Similar to pins and needles, pain can sometimes be a feature of a nerve irritation, and again similar to pins and needles it is most often felt in the thumb, index, middle and part of the ring finger.

Weakness: Sometimes, nerve irritations can cause a change in how well the nerve and the muscles 'communicate' or 'talk' to each other, which can make the muscle appear weak.

What can I do to help myself?

Calm it down:

Often the best place to start with any painful/ unpleasant complaint is to try and calm it down. In a lot of cases there will be things your hand likes to do and some things that it is less happy to do. Calming it down simply means looking at the things it doesn't like and trying to make some adjustments or changes to make it easier for yourself. For example, you might find looking at and adjusting your sleeping positions or how you hold your steering wheel or phone may be useful whilst your hand is unhappy.

Wrist splint:

If you've explored the idea of adjusting what you can to reduce how easily your hand is irritated but have had no luck, a simple night resting splint can be a useful way of helping carpal tunnel syndrome. For some people, this is the most effective option at reducing their symptoms. These splints often have a metal bar on the palm side which will limit how easily you can bend your wrist (which is often something that will irritate carpal tunnel syndrome). They are to be worn at night and preferably not during the day to avoid your wrist getting stiff or weakened.

These splints can be easily purchased online (search: carpal tunnel splint) or can be provided by the physiotherapy department, which may be discussed when you have your appointment with us.

Will it get better?

For most people, carpal tunnel syndrome will not be a pleasant experience but reassuringly, it does have the potential to get better. By understanding the issue as best you can and by adjusting what is sore to then allow you to explore some exercise/s, is often the best formula for success.

If you would like to know more about carpal tunnel syndrome or find a greater choice of exercises, you can explore our dedicated webpage.

Search online: [Norfolk and Waveney MSK services](#) 'carpal tunnel syndrome'

Exercises



Sitting or standing. Straighten your arm and at the same time tilt your head towards your hand then bend your elbow and at the same time tilt your head away from your hand.

Complete this slowly and rhythmically for 30 seconds, little and often throughout the day.



Sitting or standing. With your arms in front of you, straighten your arm and at the same time tilt your head towards the straight arm then straighten the other arm and at the same time tilt your head towards the straight arm. Complete this slowly and rhythmically for 30 seconds little and often throughout the day.

Complete little and often throughout the day.



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