

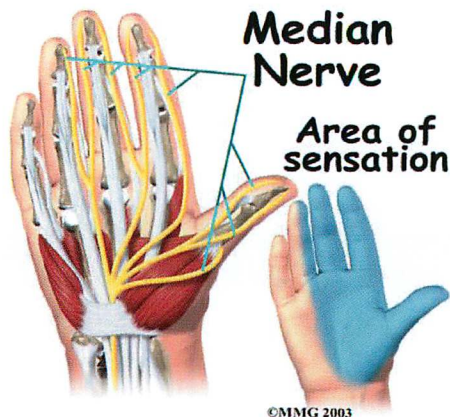
About Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome occurs when the median nerve is compressed at the wrist. This compression is responsible for the numbness and tingling that occur with this condition.

About the Median Nerve

- The median nerve travels from the neck all the way down the arm and into the hand through the carpal tunnel.
- It is responsible for sensation to the palm side of the thumb, index and middle fingers, and part of the ring finger.
- It is also responsible for sending impulses to some of the small muscles of the hand, allowing your fingers and thumb to move.



Why Does the Median Nerve Become Compressed?

- The median nerve can become compressed during certain wrist positions that occur with activities such as typing, sleeping, and racquet sports.
- The carpal tunnel is very narrow so any systemic condition which results in swelling at the wrist can also compress the median nerve. Common systemic conditions that can lead to carpal tunnel syndrome include the following:
 - Diabetes
 - Hypothyroidism
 - Arthritis
 - Pregnancy

Symptoms

Common symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome include the following:

- Tingling or numbness in the hand and/or fingers excluding the pinky
- Pain radiating from the wrist either up the arm to the shoulder or down into the palm or fingers, especially after forceful or repetitive use such as driving or typing on keyboard
- Pain is commonly worst at night
- Hand weakness and a tendency to drop objects

How Physical Therapy Can Help

Physical Therapy can help patients with carpal tunnel syndrome in a number of ways.

- Modalities (heat/ice, electric stimulation, ultrasound) to decrease pain/inflammation and promote healing
- Therapeutic exercises to strengthen wrist and hand muscles
- Manual techniques to improve wrist range of motion (ROM)
- Personalized home exercise program to maintain strength/flexibility outside of therapy
- Education on body mechanics, technique modifications to prevent future recurrence

With physical therapy, many patients gain relief from their carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms and are able to return to full activity with improved strength and flexibility.

