

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

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Carpal tunnel syndrome

A patient's guide

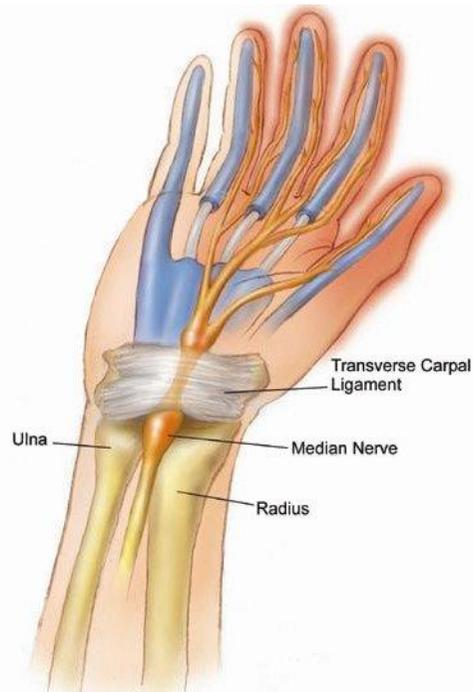


Introduction

This leaflet covers the diagnosis of your Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS), the possible treatments, and how you can help yourself to ease the symptoms, because this is a health problem that can be remedied.

What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is caused by compression (squashing) of the median nerve in the carpal tunnel, at the base of the hand and thumb. The nerve gets compressed if the carpal tendons (there are nine around the median nerve) become swollen, possibly after a fracture, repetitive strain from typing, guitar playing, similar action or from another condition, such as pregnancy.



More information

For up to date referral and service information please see our website.

Further advice including self-management videos can also be found on our website: www.whittington.nhs.uk/msk

Further information is available online

NHS choices

www.nhs.uk/conditions/carpal-tunnel-syndrome/Pages/Whatisit.aspx

Arthritis research UK

www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/conditions/carpal-tunnel-syndrome/

Patient.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk/health/carpal-tunnel-syndrome-leaflet

Further treatment

For some people, symptoms continue and the only option is for surgery. Surgery cannot undo the nerve damage that has already been done, so complete resolution of symptoms is not guaranteed. There are two methods available:

- Open surgery, which leaves a long thin scar along the palm side of the hand or wrist.
- Keyhole surgery, which leaves three or so short scars.

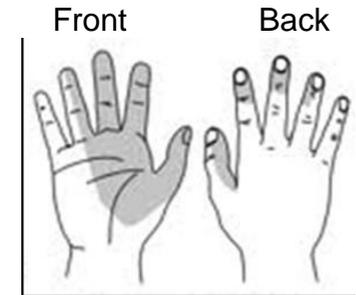
Summary

Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS):

- Can be painful.
- Can develop quickly as a result of trauma, or slowly as a result of repetitive strain.
- May be eased if you relieve the compression of the nerve by wearing a splint, especially at night.
- May improve if you continue bending your wrists and maintain your strength through regular daily exercise, and if it is protected from further repetitive strain injury.
- May be treated with a corticosteroid injection.
- You may require surgery.

Symptoms

A tingling sensation, like pins & needles, or numbness in the shaded area shown here.



It is relatively common in the UK, with about three per cent of men and five per cent of women being affected at some stage, mostly after 30 years of age.

While the symptoms can disappear on their own, often they can be relieved by exercise and by wearing a splint at night (so that the neutral position of the wrist in the splint reduces the compression).



When symptoms are mild or moderate, then corticosteroid (**anti-inflammatory** medicine) injection can help.

There is no evidence that **non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)** such as ibuprofen can benefit in any way. Speak to your GP about pain control options.

Exercises to help ease your condition

Exercises to strengthen and move the muscles, illustrated here, are very important, and work well, especially for those who have developed carpal tunnel syndrome through repetitive strain injuries that involve the hands and fingers.

