

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON HEALTH CENTER

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CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a nerve impingement syndrome in the hand, which causes pain and loss of feeling, frequently between the thumb and the first three fingers. It involves the median and/or ulnar nerve at the wrist joint, and the blood vessels and tendons of the hand.

The major causes are from inflammation of the tendon sheaths secondary from sprains, dislocations or other injuries. Swelling causes pressure on the nerves at the wrist. Signs and symptoms are tingling or numbness in part of the hand; sharp pains that shoot from the wrist up the arm, especially at night; burning sensations in the fingers; morning stiffness or cramping of the hands; thumb weakness; frequent dropping of Objects; and, shiny, dry skin on the hand. It can occur in the feet as well, though is less frequent in occurrence.

Increased risk of this condition is seen in conjunction with diabetes mellitus, hypothyroidism, menopause, raynaud's disease, pregnancy, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, ganglion cyst or work that requires repetitive hand or wrist action. Treatment consists of taking frequent breaks when doing repetitive work involving the hands, and wearing a wrist brace when feasible.

Your physician may order diagnostic studies. These may include electrophysiological nerve tests and x-rays of the hands and wrists.

Conservative treatment is usually tried first, as listed above, plus anti-inflammatory drugs to reduce inflammation. Cortisone injections at the wrist may help. For work at a computer terminal, be sure that the desk, keyboard and chair are at the proper height. Surgery to free the pinched nerve may ultimately need to be done. Rarely permanent numbness and weakness of the affected hand may occur, but a good functional outcome is the rule rather than the exception. Carefully designed physical therapy often helps immeasurably.

If we can be of service to you, please call the University of Houston Health Clinic.

We at the Health Center will be happy to help you.



Healthfully yours,

Dr. Healthberry

For questions or comments you can;

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