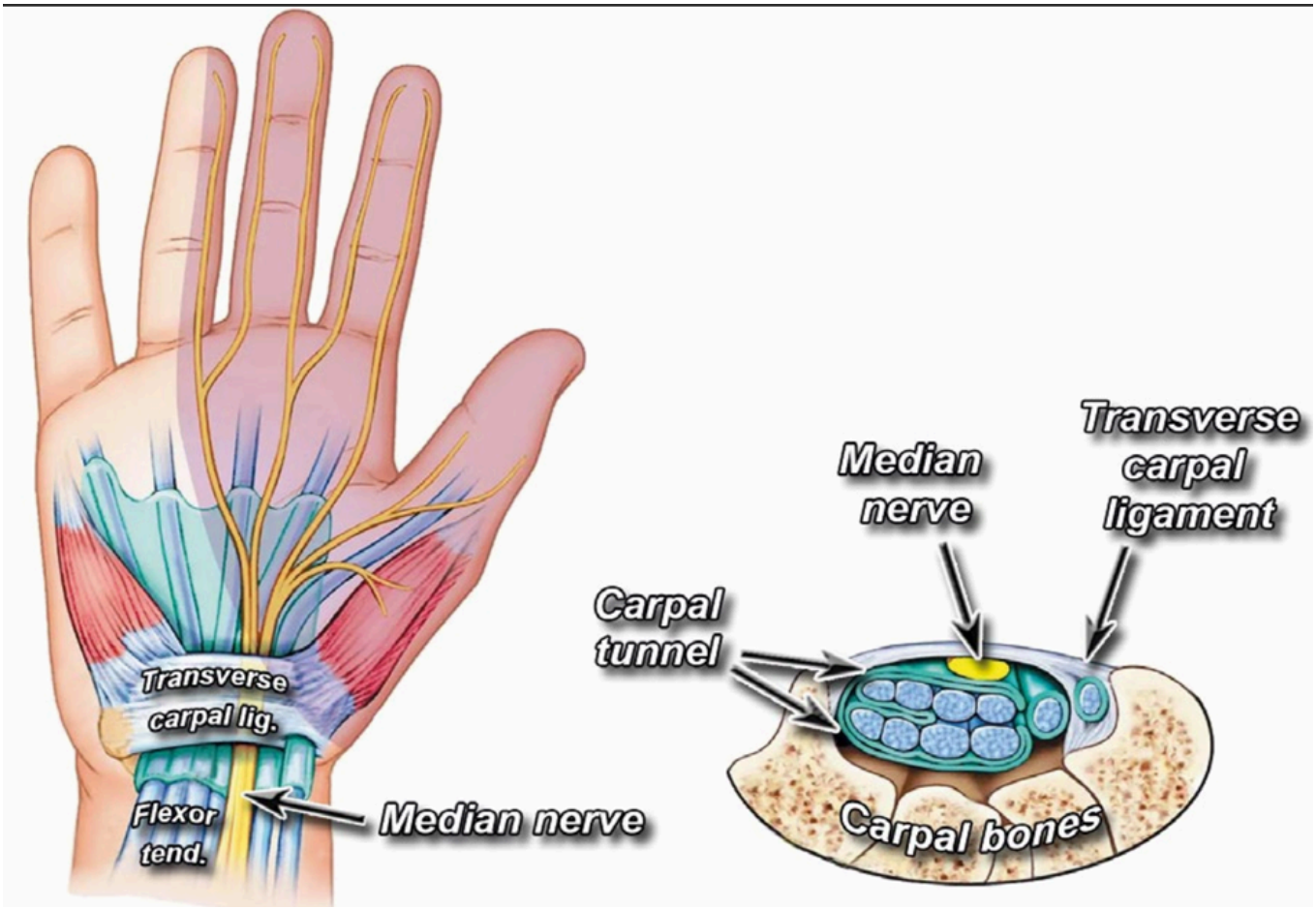
Carpal Tunnel:



What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a condition caused by excess pressure on the median nerve in the wrist. The carpal tunnel is a narrow passageway surrounded by ligaments on the palm side of the hand. When excess pressure exists, the median nerve becomes compressed and pain may be produced.

What are the symptoms?

Numbness or Tingling. You may notice tingling and numbness in the fingers or hand. Usually the thumb and index, middle and ring fingers are affected, but may involve the whole hand. The sensation may travel from the wrist up the arm. These symptoms may occur while holding a steering wheel, phone or newspaper, or may wake you from

sleep. Many people "shake out" their hands to try to relieve their symptoms. The numb feeling may become constant over time. Weakness. You may experience weakness in the hand and drop objects. This may be due to numbness in the hand or weakness of the thumb's pinching muscles, which are supplied by the median nerve.

What are the causes?

Anything that squeezes or irritates the median nerve in the carpal tunnel space may lead to carpal tunnel syndrome. A wrist fracture can narrow the carpal tunnel and irritate the nerve, as can the swelling and inflammation caused by repetitive motion activities such
as: typing ,gaming, and writing. People who use vibrating machinery, play sports involving hand movements, or knit may be at risk for developing carpal tunnel syndrome. Other risks can include pregnancy, Rheumatoid arthritis, and hypothyroidism.

What is the treatment?

Prevention:

- Reduce your force and relax your grip. If your work involves a cash register or keyboard, for instance, hit the keys softly. For prolonged handwriting, use a big pen with an oversized, soft grip adapter and free-flowing ink.
- Take short, frequent breaks. Gently stretch and bend hands and wrists periodically. Alternate tasks when possible. This is especially important if you use equipment that vibrates or that requires you to exert a great amount of force. Even a few minutes each hour can make a difference.
- Watch your form. Avoid bending your wrist all the way up or down. A relaxed middle position is best. Keep your keyboard at elbow height or slightly lower.
- Change your computer mouse. Make sure that your computer mouse is comfortable and doesn't strain your wrist.
- Keep your hands warm. You're more likely to develop hand pain and stiffness if you work in a cold environment. If you can't control the temperature at work, put on fingerless gloves that keep the hands and wrists warm.

Medical/Surgical Treatment:

1. **Medicine:** Over the counter pain relievers can help such as Advil, Tylenol, and Aleve.

2. **Splinting:** A wrist stabilizer splint can help you if you are experiencing your symptoms in the morning this splint can help keep your wrist in a better position while you are sleeping to decrease your symptoms.

3. **Injections**: Cortisone injection to the wrist may decrease your symptoms.

If symptoms do not respond to above measures, your doctor may recommend surgery to release the pressure in the carpal tunnel.