

Carpal tunnel syndrome affects eight million Americans

How to prevent CTS.

Carpal tunnel syndrome is spreading across the U.S. in epidemic proportions, with eight million Americans currently affected. Simply stated, carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is a painful disorder caused by the compression of the median nerve within the carpal tunnel area in the wrist.

Exactly what causes compression of the median nerve? Personal factors such as wrist size, hormonal imbalances, gender, obesity, and fitness level play a major part in the development of CTS. Workers in occupations that repeatedly require the wrists to be flexed or abnormally positioned for long periods of time are prone to CTS. Assembly workers, cash register operators, data entry, food processors, and construction workers are likely to contract the disorder.

Personal and Economic Impact

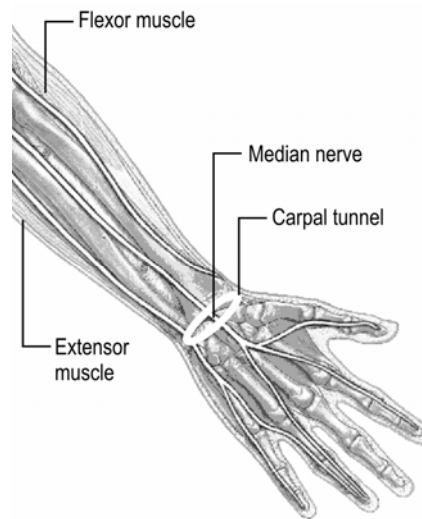
According to the National Safety Council, CTS is the third most expensive workers comp injury after amputations and crush injuries. Typically, workers missed an average of 30 days of work. The lengthiest absence for any job-related illnesses.

The biggest burden falls on the employee. Statistics show that only 23 percent of all carpal tunnel patients are able to return to their profession following surgery. And, 36 percent of all carpal tunnel patients need unlimited medical treatment.

How to Avoid Getting CTS

Give your wrists a rest break! Look for ergonomic solutions at work and home. When using your hands, try and keep your wrists in neutral, that is, in the same relative position to your arms as they are when your arms are resting naturally at your sides. Use tools that are ergonomically designed to keep your wrists in neutral, and reduce excessive force and repetitive motion.

A Common Cause: Everyday tasks require constant gripping or pinching action (flexion). Repetitive gripping or the use of tools, keyboards, steering wheels, and other devices causes the muscles of the forearms (flexor muscles) to overdevelop compared to the extensor muscles on the back of the arms. This creates a significant imbalance, enough to put considerable stress on the bones in the wrist and forearm, and the hand stays more flexed (out of neutral), which stresses the carpal tunnel, causing swelling and pain.



Balanced Prevention: By nature, the forearm muscles (flexor muscles) are considerably stronger than the extensor muscles. To maintain balance and relieve stress, you must lengthen the flexor muscles and tendons, and strengthen the extensor muscles. Practice both stretching and strengthening exercises that involve these muscles. Forearm, shoulder/finger, and wrist/finger extension

stretches have been included in the Back Synergy™ stretching program for this purpose.

If you've never had CTS, include these stretches in your daily activities as a prevention; if you have had or currently have CTS, these stretches, performed gently and consistently, can reduce pain and improve movement.

Solutions such as splinting and anti-inflammatory drugs are available, but only treat the symptoms of CTS. The only real relief comes in eliminating the root cause of the problem. Implement good ergonomic design and make a commitment to pursue personal health.



TEAM SAFETY, INC. is a safety and performance management firm working to build organization excellence.

Visit www.teamsafetyinc.com.