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## **CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME**

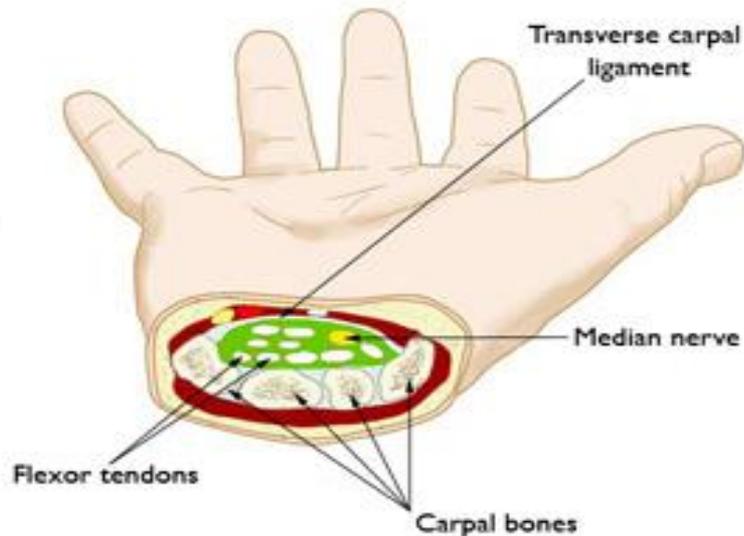
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## What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

The median nerve gives sensation to the thumb, index, long, and part of the ring fingers. In carpal tunnel syndrome, the median nerve is pinched in a tunnel formed by the wrist bones and a tough band of tissue. The median nerve can get pinched when tendons that go through the same tunnel get swollen. Carpal tunnel syndrome can be associated with repetitive wrist use, broken wrist bones, arthritis, thyroid imbalances, diabetes, menopause, and pregnancy.



Rodner C, Raissis A, Akelman E. American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, 2009.

## What are the symptoms?

- Numbness and tingling in the thumb, index, long, and ring fingers in one or both hands.
- Sometimes, pain and numbness into the wrist and forearm.
- Usually worse at night and can wake you up from sleep.
- Worse with driving, writing, and typing.
- Come and go at first, but will eventually be all the time.
- In severe cases, the hand muscles shrink, and cause a weak grip, and trouble moving the fingers.

## What tests will I need?

- **X-Rays:** to rule out any abnormal bone structures that might be causing your symptoms.
- **EMG/NCV (Nerve conduction study):** to show if the nerve is carrying signals normally and if hand muscles are responding. In carpal tunnel syndrome, signals can be slow or weak.

## How is it treated?

- **Braces:** wearing these at night keeps the wrist straight and allows the swollen wrist to rest.
- **Anti-inflammatory Medicine:** controls swelling in the wrist. These include naproxen, ibuprofen, and meloxicam.
- **Steroid injections:** anti-inflammatories injected into the wrist. This can be repeated every 3 months.
- **Carpal Tunnel Release:** the goal of this surgery is to prevent symptoms from getting worse, but most patients report resolution of symptoms.

## What do I need to know about surgery?

- You will be contacted within 2 weeks after your pre-op appointment for pricing and scheduling.
- The surgery will last less than 30 minutes and you will go home the same day.
- There are no restrictions on movement or lifting things.
- Your surgeon will make small incision at the palm base and cut the ligament that is pinching the median nerve.
- The bandage over the incision should be kept clean and dry.
- At your 2 week follow up visit, the sutures and bandage will be removed, and you will begin scar massage.
- If you are having symptoms in the other hand, you will be given the option to have surgery at your 4 week follow up.