

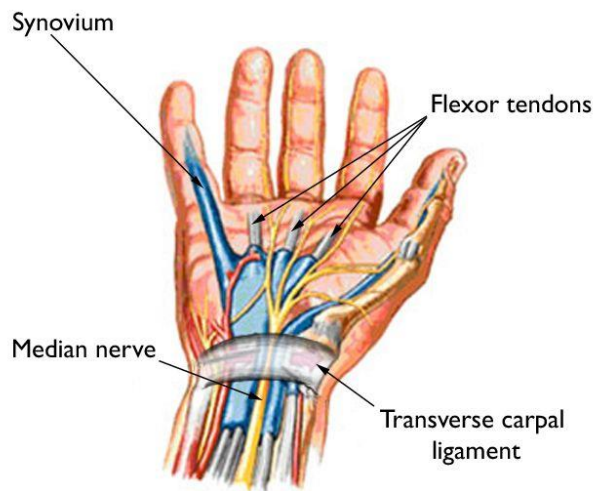
DO YOU HAVE CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME?

When hand pain occurs most individuals will assume they have carpal tunnel syndrome. Knowing what to look for will help you go in the right direction. Here are the most common symptoms:

1. Numbness & Tingling (“pins and needles” feeling)

Numbness or tingling sensations on the palm side in the wrist, palm and more typically in the fingers. Many people describe the sensation in all the fingers; however, it can be in just a few or just one most commonly in the thumb, index finger, middle finger or inside of the ring finger and may exclude the pinky.

The median nerve gets compressed in the carpal tunnel of the wrist and cuts off the sensation to the hand. Often wrist flexor tendons become inflamed initially known as “tendinitis” (pain in wrist, hand & mid-forearm on the palm side) and when they enlarge they put pressure on the median nerve’s blood supply to the hand/fingers. The median nerve supplies the muscles of the hand so long term compression can cause muscular atrophy (shrinking) of the hand musculature.



2.) Dropping items

Muscle Weakness: With compromised blood supply to hand muscles (mostly the large thumb base muscle area) the muscle can waste away and the hand can become weak with grip and pinch tasks. This can be the most damaging side affect of carpal tunnel syndrome and may progress if continued untreated.

3. Disrupted Sleep

Many people complain of waking up in the middle of the night or mornings with the numbness & tingling in the hands.

While there are many other symptoms that can occur with carpal tunnel syndrome, these are the 3 main identifying complaints.

How is carpal tunnel treated?

Whenever tingling occurs the best posture is to position the arms down by your side and let them just relax into the hands. Many people report shaking them out. We usually treat the injury with rest or modified use (reduce the static & repetitive gripping of the hands), positioning hands relaxed at the side of the body, icing the wrist & hands and splinting with a wrist brace at night consistently for 6 weeks (ideal is sleeping on your back with arms at your side or any posture that resolves or reduces the tingling). Occasionally doctors will prescribe an anti-inflammatory to help reduce the inflammation in the hand/wrist.

There are many other ways to treat this condition and each case is different. Problem solving the cause and modifying it is the best way to approach the situation vs only treating the symptoms so an evaluation of your lifestyle with a proactive approach is most ideal!

I am extremely dedicated to providing the most optimal outcome for your health and well-being and I sincerely look forward to the opportunity of working with you and resolving your discomfort!

Laurann Putnam, Hand/Upper Extremity Specialist at **Los Gatos Hand Therapy**



