

Natural Help 4...

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome



What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a **painful condition affecting the hand and wrist**. The carpal tunnel is a narrow passageway made up of bones and ligaments at the base of your hand, and also contains the median nerve and tendons of the thumb and fingers. The tendons connect your muscles to your bones while the median nerve provides sensation and feeling to the fingers and hand.

Only the fingers served by the median nerve - **the thumb, the index and middle fingers, and part of the ring finger** - are affected by **carpal tunnel syndrome**. The median nerve carries signals from the brain to control the feeling and action of the fingers and hand. It allows you to feel temperature, pain, numbness, tingling, and also controls sweating of the hand.

When **ligaments and tendons in the carpal tunnel become swollen and inflamed**, they squeeze against the median nerve. This type of pressure on the nerve can injure the hand, causing pain or numbness. Sometimes, **carpal tunnel syndrome can even be triggered by one's job**, and people with this condition often experience difficulty performing simple functions such as fastening buttons, turning keys or unscrewing bottle tops.

Diagnosing Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

The diagnosis of carpal tunnel syndrome is **based on a physical examination as well as the symptoms** presented. The doctor may also discuss the patient's occupation and address the risks that may contribute to carpal tunnel syndrome, as well as available [carpal tunnel treatments](#).

Tests for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Certain tests may also be performed to confirm the diagnosis, including the Tinel, Phalen and electromyography tests.

The Tinel Test involves the doctor tapping the median nerve at the wrist and is said to be 'positive' if a tingling sensation is felt.

The Phalen Test involves the patient placing the backs of the hands together and bending the wrists for one minute to see if this causes any symptoms. The electromyography tests the nerves and muscles using electrical stimuli and can help to confirm the diagnosis.

Carpal tunnel syndrome is most common in women, and while it may develop at any age, it does seem to increase with age. People in their 40s and 50s are more

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likely to be affected.

Symptoms of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms usually start gradually and **include aching, tingling, "pins and needles", a swollen feeling, burning, numbness or pain in the hand and fingers.** These symptoms may spread up your arm and tend to be worse at night or first thing in the morning. It can affect one or both hands, and occasionally even the arm and shoulder.

Initially, symptoms may be mild or occur occasionally. As the symptoms become worse, numbness and loss of manual dexterity occurs. **Weakness in the hand** occurs, making it increasingly difficult to grasp objects. In extremely severe cases, the thumb muscles may waste away or the median nerve may be permanently damaged. Temporary relief may be felt by hanging your arm out of the bed, shaking or massaging the hand.

What Causes Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

The cause of carpal tunnel syndrome is unknown. However, any condition that exerts pressure on the median nerve at the wrist can cause carpal tunnel syndrome. **Carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms may also result from doing the same hand movements repeatedly.** This condition affects people who have occupations such as carpenters, assembly-line workers, musicians, mechanics, hairdressers, cashiers or grocery checkers. People who use vibrating tools are particularly at risk. Baking, gardening, golfing, needlework, knitting or canoeing are extramural activities that may also lead to carpal tunnel syndrome.

Causes of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

- An injury to the wrist, such as a fracture or sprain
- Diabetes
- Arthritis
- Hypothyroidism
- Gout
- Amyloidosis
- Tumors and cysts
- Pregnancy
- Use of oral contraceptives
- Menopause

Help for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

If carpal tunnel syndrome is brought about as a **result of an underlying disease**, it is best to treat the problem first. Mild symptoms may be treated with medications such as pain relievers and anti-inflammatory drugs, a cortisone shot, rest and a splint. The splint will reduce the pain and helps to keep your hand from moving, but at the same time allows your hand to still perform most of its core functions.

Applying ice packs to the wrist, massaging the area, acupuncture, and doing stretching exercises may also help. In cases where **carpal tunnel syndrome**



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Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

symptoms are severe, surgery may be necessary -- but this should be your very last option.

Natural Remedies for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Natural and holistic **carpal tunnel treatments** can also provide relief for **carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms**. Using treatments such as homeopathic and herbal remedies are a gentler way of improving overall health and well-being.

Several herbs can **reduce the inflammation** associated with **carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms** and act as anti-inflammatory agents, such as the flowering tops of St. John's Wort when applied as a cream, Meadowsweet leaves, White willow bark, and Turmeric. Ginkgo biloba and Rosmarinus officinale (Rosemary) dilate and strengthen blood vessels and increase peripheral and cerebral circulation – helping to **restore the functioning of the circulatory system** and promoting peripheral blood flow to the extremities as well as circulation to the brain.

Carpal tunnel treatments many times include Zingiber officinalis, more commonly known as Ginger. Ginger has strong anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving properties, and is often used to treat **joint pain**.

Tips for the Prevention of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

- Take regular breaks from repeated hand movements to give your hands and wrists time to rest.
- Try not to bend, extend or twist your hands if you are repeating the same tasks with your hands.
- Avoid working with your arms too close or too far from your body.
- Switch hands during work tasks.
- Do not rest your wrists on hard surfaces for long periods.
- Increase your intake of Vitamin B6 to ease the painful, numbing and tingling sensations.
- Eat a healthy diet that includes whole grains, seeds, nuts and vegetables.
- If you are overweight, lose weight in a healthy manner.

The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is **not the only treatment option**. Conventional Western medicine (often called allopathic or orthodox medicine) is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools, and many pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available and freely used-- even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is 'better' than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that **both have a role to play in the treatment program**.

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Natural medicine has often been frowned upon by conventional doctors, especially by those who do not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby **providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options** from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, **natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed** by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the **body has an innate capacity to heal itself**. While natural medicines are often called 'alternative' or 'complimentary' medicines, they are, in fact, a **unique and independent form of medicine** in their own right, well able to **treat a variety of conditions**. Perhaps the term 'holistic' medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine. This encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a **holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease**. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to **support health** (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer. In many cases, **holistic medicine can accomplish just as much**, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, **natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing**.

In many cases, they can **succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed**. Despite frequent reports that they are 'unproven' and 'untested', the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a **long history of usage** and there is a **wealth of empirical evidence** to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to **support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines**.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines **must be manufactured in the correct way**, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately, **not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards**, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – and giving natural remedies a bad name.



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Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called 'standardized' extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While '**standardized**' extracts may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have **grave disadvantages**, including an increase in side effects, as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which **retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb** as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, **always choose wisely**. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life-threatening condition, don't make changes without first discussing them with your doctor, in order that your condition may be monitored. **Well-informed and supportive practitioners will support patients** who want to take responsibility for their own health.

Related Natural Remedies:

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