The median nerve can become compressed as it passes through the carpal tunnel, causing pain and numbness and impairing movement of the hand and fingers.

Initial Treatment

Initial treatment generally involves resting the hand and wrist for at least two weeks avoiding activities that may worsen symptoms. Cool (ice) packs can relieve swelling and pressure on the median nerve and provide immediate temporary relief. Immobilize wrist to avoid further damage from twisting or bending.

Keeping up with an exercise routine to prevent carpal tunnel will help prevent the need for surgery.
Who can get it?

Computer users, cashiers, dishwashers and assembly-line workers often get the same injury. What they all have in common are jobs that involve using their hands in repetitive motions that put a strain on the tendons of the wrist. The result is a debilitating disorder called carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS), which affects hundreds of thousands of Americans and costs employers billions of dollars a year.

Other Causes?

Other causes can exert pressure on this nerve as well. Causes include fractures and dislocations, fluid retention, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, elongation and enlargement of certain bones (acromegaly) and decreased function of the thyroid gland that results in swelling of the tissues (myxedema).

Exercises to Injure-Proof Your Wrists

Keeping your wrists strong and flexible and alleviating strain on the carpal tunnel by stretching your wrists often during the day can help prevent injury. These exercises should be done three-to-five times a week. (A 16-ounce soft drink bottle or can of food can be used instead of a dumbbell.)

Note: Do not do these exercises if you already have pain or numbness. They are meant as a preventive measure and may aggravate an existing problem.

Limbering up:

» Massage the inside and outside of hand with thumb and fingers.

» Grasp fingers and gently bend back wrist. Hold for five seconds.

» Gently pull thumb down and back until you feel the stretch. Hold for five seconds.

» Clench fist tightly, then release, fanning out fingers. Repeat five times.

Wrist Rotation:

Stand, or sit, with your elbows close to your waist, your forearms extended in front of you and parallel to the floor, and your palms facing down. Make fists with both hands and make circles with your fists in one direction. Next, open your hands, extend your fingers and repeat the entire sequence.

Wrist Curl:

Stand, or sit, with your elbows close to your waist, your forearms extended in front of you and parallel to the floor, and your palms facing down. Grasp a one-pound dumbbell in each hand and slowly bend your wrists down, holding for five seconds. Do 10 repetitions.

Sideways Wrist Bend:

Stand, or sit, with your elbows close to your waist, your forearms extended in front of you and parallel to the floor, and your palms facing down. Grasp a one-pound dumbbell in each hand. Keeping your forearms still, slowly bend you wrists from side to side, moving the weights toward, then away from one another in a windshield wiper-like motion. Do 10 repetitions.

Wrist Twist:

Stand, or sit, with your elbows close to your waist, your forearms extended in front of you and parallel to the floor, and your palms up. Grasp a one-pound dumbbell in each hand and slowly turn your wrists and forearms until your palms are facing up, then turn them down again. Do 10 repetitions.

Limbering up:

» Massage the inside and outside of hand with thumb and fingers.

» Grasp fingers and gently bend back wrist. Hold for five seconds.

» Gently pull thumb down and back until you feel the stretch. Hold for five seconds.

» Clench fist tightly, then release, fanning out fingers. Repeat five times.

Wrist Rotation:

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