

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

What is it?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is caused by a pinched nerve in your wrist. The pinched nerve causes a numb, tingling feeling in your hand and arm. If you have carpal tunnel syndrome, your hand may also feel weak and clumsy.

Hand pain and arm pain are common symptoms. The syndrome is caused by activities that increase pressure on the nerves and tendons on the palm side of the wrist. Some causes include:

- Sprain
- Fracture
- Arthritis
- Fluid retention

Often, there is no known cause. Carpal tunnel syndrome can be treated with lifestyle changes, surgery or other options. Your GP can help you learn about the treatment options and what to do if it gets worse.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP may check your symptoms and suggest treatments for your carpal tunnel. Your GP may also:

- Help you learn how to avoid tasks that make carpal tunnel worse (holding heavy trays or dishes)
- Limit activities requiring repeat force by the wrist (like pruning)
- Suggest wearing a wrist splint at night
- Suggest a steroid injection

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- How long will my carpal tunnel take to heal?*
- What pain relief medication can I take?*
- What activities should I avoid?*



What will my GP do in the future?

If your carpal tunnel is not getting better after treatment, or if symptoms are affecting your sleep, life or daily activities, your GP may refer you to a hand therapist.

Surgery may be an option in severe cases.

What can I do?

Follow your GP's advice about lifestyle changes and ways to avoid making your carpal tunnel worse. Ask your GP about pain relief. Keep an eye on your symptoms, and see your GP if you notice loss of feeling in your hand or fingers.

What supports are available?

If you notice your carpal tunnel is not getting better or is getting worse, your GP can refer you to a private hand specialist called an orthopaedic surgeon. A physiotherapist may also be able to help ease your symptoms with gentle exercises. Talk to your GP about the options.

Where can I learn more?

- **Better Health Channel** – Carpal Tunnel Syndrome: betterhealth.vic.gov.au