

A Tunnel of Hope; Navigating Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Imagine what your life would be like if you did not have function of your hands. As a society, we are very dependent on our hands and if we are lucky enough to have two that function, we can take for granted how well they work. From carrying groceries to giving a firm hand shake or signing your name; our hands help us navigate our World in a spectacular way. Now, imagine if that function was gone. Over 19 million Americans suffer from just that, according to American Family Physician (1,2). Carpal Tunnel Syndrome can be a debilitating condition that effects the function of one or both hands. Symptoms typically consist of pain, stiffness, numbness and tingling in the hand. The thumb, index and middle fingers are most commonly effected. These symptoms may be accompanied with grip strength loss and clumsiness of the hand and fingers. That's the bad news. So where's the good news, Doc? Well hold tight, there is a light at the end of this tunnel!

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome or CTS is a nerve compression issue. The nerve being compressed is known as the Median nerve and it passes through a “tunnel” made by the carpals or the wrist bones on the under side of the wrist. There is a ligament that crosses over the top and serves as the roof of the tunnel. This transverse ligament is designed to hold the bones into the tunnel position. In Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, the tunnel narrows so much that the nerve can no longer pass without being compressed. When a nerve is compressed, you begin to have pain at the injury site. That pain may begin to radiate into the hand and fingers. Continued compression of the nerve can lead to altered sensations in that particular area consisting of burning, numbness and tingling. In cases of severe nerve compression, you may notice muscle strength loss of the effected hand and fingers.

If you find yourself with these symptoms, your first step should be to schedule an appointment for a thorough examination to confirm or deny the diagnosis of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. Additional sensory and motor function test may be ordered and performed by a neurologist for further evaluation. These additional tests show the doctor exactly where the nerve compression is occurring. If CTS is the

diagnosis, there are several option that we will outline below.

A Chiropractor has the ability to diagnose and treat Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. They are also able to make the appropriate referral if you are not responding to care in a timely manner. In our office, we would begin with a treatment plan of conservative care. Said plan would consist of multiple physiologic therapeutics including but not limited to ultrasound, electric stimulation, massage therapy, cold laser therapy, mobilization, manipulation and therapeutic taping. Nutritional counseling will be addressed to decrease inflammation in the body and help you heal even faster. Specific CTS wrist braces would likely be implemented for continued support outside of the office. There is a surgical option, but most physicians would agree that a trial of conservative care would be appropriate to begin with.

If you are apprehensive about surgery and want to try a non-invasive treatment, give our office a call. We will schedule and see you for an evaluation and treatment on the day that you call! Not many offices can accommodate that promise. We do not want you to wait and suffer in pain! Let us help you reduce pain and regain the function of these spectacular tools that we call hands.

Yours in health,

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Work Cited

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2.) "US and World Population Clock." www.census.gov. United States Census Bureau. April 1, 2010. Web. 30 June 2016.