

Introduction

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) is the term used to describe tingling, numbness or pain in a certain part of your hand (median nerve distribution) at rest. The illustration on the front of this leaflet shows which areas (pink shaded) are usually affected. Long term symptoms might also result in reduced grip strength.

What causes CTS?

There are many causes of CTS, including:

- Obesity
- Pregnancy or menopause
- Repetitive and/or forceful movements
- Previous injury
- Hereditary factors
- Medical conditions such as diabetes or arthritis
- Hand Transmitted Vibration (HAV) leads to V-CTS

If you believe that your symptoms are related to, or caused by your job, you should always raise your concerns with your employer or Occupational Health Practitioner.

What can I do?

If you are suffering mild or occasional symptoms, you may first wish to try and manage it yourself. There are a few things that might help, including:

Stopping or reducing the thing(s) that could cause it:

Work or hobbies that cause you to repeatedly flex your wrist or forcefully grip or apply force to an object may be a factor.

Taking over-the-counter medication:

Painkillers such as ibuprofen or paracetamol may provide short term relief from painful symptoms but should not be relied on for long term treatment.

Wearing a wrist splint:

Wearing a splint at night might help to control symptoms and minimise the likelihood of them disturbing your sleep. You may need to wear it for some time before seeing a benefit. Talk to your pharmacist if you would like to try this option.

Hand Exercises

There is a little evidence that targeted hand exercises might help ease symptoms. Instructions can be found here:

<https://www.csp.org.uk/public-patient/rehabilitation-exercises/carpal-tunnel-syndrome>

What if these suggestions don't help?

For moderate or severe symptoms, or for mild symptoms that do not respond to self-care, then you should seek review with your family doctor (GP) or some other Healthcare Professional such as a Physiotherapist.

What tests can help confirm a diagnosis of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

- Examinations such as Tinel's or Phalen's tests
- Nerve Conduction Studies
- MRI or Ultrasound scans

What treatments are available?

Steroid Injection:

In some cases, this brings down the swelling around the (Median) nerve, reducing symptoms.

Decompression surgery:

A simple procedure which reduces pressure on the affected (Median) nerve and, in most cases, relieves symptoms.

Note that both procedures may require some time off work afterwards (in the case of surgery, up to 12 weeks depending on the type of work undertaken & speed of recovery)

More information about Carpal Tunnel Syndrome may be found here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/carpal-tunnel-syndrome/>

Special Considerations

In most cases, surgery usually cures Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. However, where an employee has been exposed to Hand Transmitted Vibration and that exposure has been “substantial”, then there may be some residual symptoms still present after surgery and these symptoms may get worse with further exposure. More Information about Vibration Induced CTS (V-CTS) may be found here:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg175.htm>

A copy of this leaflet may be downloaded from:

<https://mohs.co.uk/resources/>

Issued Sep 25 (23.25)

23.25

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) A Guide for Employees



mohs
workplace health

MOHS Workplace Health Ltd

83 Birmingham Road
West Bromwich
B70 6PX
0121 601 4041
www.mohs.co.uk