



Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

The carpal tunnel is an area in the front of the wrist. Four small bones make up the floor, while a ligament forms the roof of this oval shaped tunnel. There is only limited room for a substantial number of structures, including tendons and nerves, to travel through. If the space within the carpal tunnel is decreased, inflammation and/or compression of these structures may result. Trauma to the area may come from repetitive stress or from one specific incident. It is also possible for the problem to originate anywhere from the wrist to the neck region.

Treatment will incorporate a combination of modalities (ex. ice, acupuncture), stretches, and strengthening exercises. Your therapist will educate you in the proper positioning for the wrist during activities. Splinting techniques may also be used.

The therapeutic modalities commonly used include:

Ultrasound: uses sound waves and may be used to decrease scar tissue, increase blood flow, or decrease pain.

Interferential Current: uses electrical current to decrease pain, can also be used to elicit muscle contraction and decrease swelling.

Acupuncture: uses small, solid needles to encourage healing, reduce pain, and improve function of affected areas of the body.

What can you do at home?

Rest: by decreasing your activity you allow your body a chance to heal itself. When you start to feel better it is important to ease back into activities which might be aggravating. Listen to your body - pain means that you have done too much.

Ice: ice decreases the metabolism of your cells so that they do not die despite a decrease in oxygen to the injured area. Ice should be kept on for approximately 15 minutes, several times a day. The injured area should be elevated (above the level of your heart) at the same time. Use a wet towel between the ice and your skin to protect against frostbite. You can use frozen veggies, cold packs, or real ice.

