

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome update

What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

“I have carpal tunnel syndrome” is a common phrase heard around Australia in physiotherapy clinics. But what is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome? How did it come about? And what am I supposed to go about it?

The Carpal Tunnel is just a region on the front of your wrist, one that houses nine tendons, and an important nerve known as the Median Nerve. The tendons attach to muscles starting on the inside of the forearm, and when they contract, they bend the wrist forward. Typically the tendons and nerve live happily next to each other and get along well. But sometimes they become annoyed neighbours.

Most people begin to experience carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms such as tingling (pins and needles), and numbness when they wake in the morning, or after sustained pressure to the front of the wrist (such as when on a computer). This is due to the carpal tunnel region being squashed, reducing the ability of the nerve in the carpal tunnel to ‘breathe’.

Other people have carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms during the day. This occurs with repetitive or prolonged gripping activities such as driving. This is due to tiny muscles that move the fingers being pulled into carpal tunnel, placing pressure on the nerve.



http://blackpearphysio.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Dollarphotoclub_62906627.jpg

How do I manage this?

First of all – See a team like Flex Physiotherapy to see an expert in wrist and hand problems. Make sure you get assessed by a physiotherapist who is experienced in assessing from your neck to fingertip. There are many reasons that a pain in your hand can be caused by your neck, shoulder or arm. The first way to ensure you are going to get better is by knowing what the problem is and where it is coming from. If you have seen a physio and you have not been assessed in the other regions of your arm, ask them about it.

In most cases, carpal tunnel syndrome is nothing to be concerned about as the nerve is more annoyed or irritated than damaged. The management is a simple course of preventing symptoms as you slowly and surely progress with your ability to use your hand. In most people this includes a simple course of splinting, exercises and activity modification. Others may require an injection or surgery.



The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons currently reports **there is strong evidence for the use of immobilization devices such as thermoplastic splints.**

At Flex Physiotherapy we make custom fitted thermoplastic splints. These splints are fantastic to use compared to off the shelf splints as they reduce the chance of pressure areas, and are completely waterproof – allowing you to get back doing what you love without the inconvenience of pain or tingling.

Median Nerve Slider

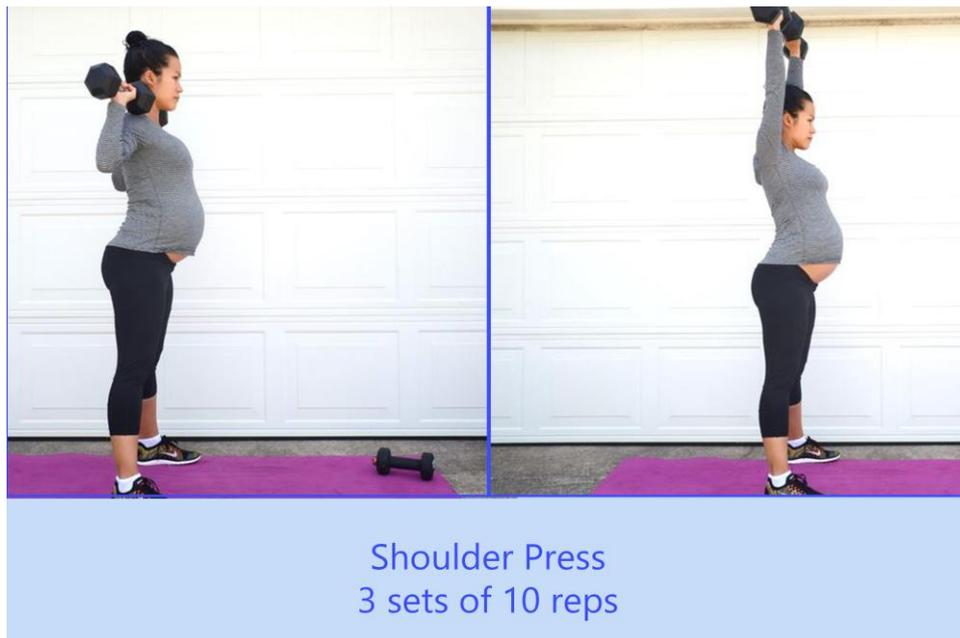
- Bend your elbow, wrist as you turn your neck to the opposite side
- Straighten your elbow, turn your palm up and bend your wrist backwards as you look at your hand
- Move to the point where you just feel a small increase in symptoms, then back away immediately

Repetitions:

Frequency:



Your physio may ask you to do some nerve gliding exercises or commence some general strengthening of muscles around your shoulder and elbow.





Images taken from:

<https://www.bloglovin.com/blogs/diary-a-fit-mommy-14421735/preparing-for-labor-at-home-dumbbell-workout-4860397575>

How long will it take?

Typically people can have their symptoms settle within 12 weeks over 3-6 consultations. The goal of early stage rehabilitation is to have reduced or absent symptoms for 3-6 weeks.

Usually this requires night time only splinting. In other people daytime splinting is also required. Each person requires a different combination of the management strategies discussed above, a great physiotherapist can help you juggle all these factors, while allowing you enough time for the rest of your life.

AAOS Guidelines

Intervention	Strength of recommendation	Recommend/Don't recommend
Immobilisation	Strong****	Recommend
Steroid injection	Strong****	Recommend
Magnet therapy	Strong****	Not recommended
Oral medication	Moderate***	Not recommended
Therapeutic ultrasound	Limited**	Unable to make recommendation