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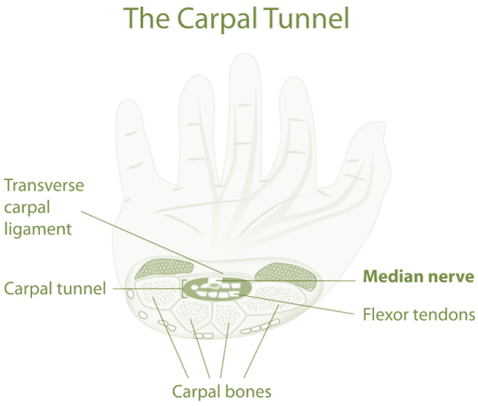
CHIROPRACTIC AND CARPAL TUNNEL

Presented by: Dr. Brandon L. Kikuchi, DC

Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is the most common nerve entrapment syndrome.[1] It is a painful condition caused by irritation or compression of the *median nerve*. In one survey of the general population, approximately 14.4% reported having symptoms resembling CTS—including numbness, tingling, weakness and pain.[2] Patient complaints are usually limited to the thumb and index finger, but in some cases may also involve the rest of the hand, the wrist and even the forearm.



This syndrome derives its name from the location where the nerve irritation/-compression most often occurs—in the **carpal tunnel** of the wrist.

Anatomically, the bones of the wrist are positioned in an arch-shaped arrangement that leaves enough space for nerves, tendons and blood vessels to pass to the hand and fingers—this area is called the Carpal Tunnel. If the passageway of this tunnel becomes crowded, the resulting pressure on the median nerve can result in any of the symptoms mentioned above.

One of the most commonly reported causes of CTS symptoms is inflammation of the tendons passing through the carpal tunnel. However, irritation of the median nerve can also be caused by displacement of one of the carpal bones, or irritation of the nerve at other locations—such as the neck, shoulder or near the elbow. Activities known to contribute to this type of syndrome are those associated with repetitive contraction of the small muscles of the hand: like typing, knitting or sewing. However, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, CTS is <u>most</u> common amongst assembly-line workers.[3]

Because chiropractors are accustomed to dealing with problems of the joints, muscles and nerves, many patients with CTS will consult with their chiropractor. This is a good thing, because although medical options can help reduce the intensity of CTS

QUESTION:

Is the carpal tunnel the opening to the hand for...
A) nerves
B) blood vessels
C) tendons
d) all of the above

ANSWER:

B) all of the above

TRUE OR FALSE:

CTS is most common in assembly-line workers

ANSWER:

True

QUESTION:

What can you do to relieve repetitive activity symptoms?
A) take frequent breaks
B) stretch tight muscles
C) see your chiropractor
d) all of the above

ANSWER:

C) all of the above

Presented by: Dr. Brandon L. Kikuchi, DC
2875 S. King St. Suite 205 Hon. HI 96826
phone: (808) 373-3384 www.kikuchichiro.com

symptoms in the vast majority of cases, surgery can be rather expensive, plus the success rate for complete resolution from carpal tunnel syndrome has been estimated as low as 60%.[4] Not to mention, there are also reported side-effects involved with surgery, including other nerve damage and delayed wound healing.[5]

How does chiropractic help?

Whereas traditional medicine tends to focus in the area of the pain, chiropractors will consider the entire kinetic chain. According to experts, dysfunctional neurological patterns in the neck can cause abnormal firing patterns in different muscles, including the ones that lead into the wrist and hand.[6] Therefore, it is important to consider the mechanics of your neck and upper back. Vertebral subluxations in these areas could be one of the main contributing factors to CTS!

In addition, chiropractors also know how the alignment of the bones in your wrist and elbow could be the cause of your symptoms. When joints are not aligned properly, the resulting inflammation and pain can cause spasm of the muscles in the area of the subluxation, plus irritation of the surrounding soft tissues. This alone could be the cause of the swelling and irritation of the tendons in the carpal tunnel. Sometimes, just a quick and gentle adjustment applied to one of the bones in these areas can help relieve the pressure.

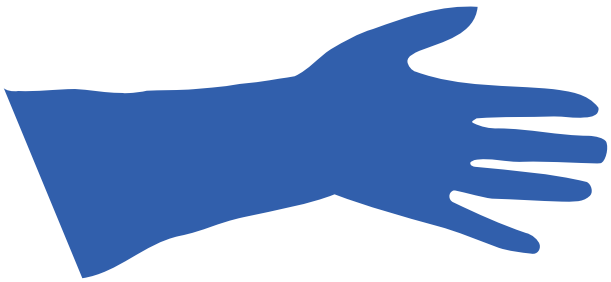
When it comes to carpal tunnel syndrome, like any other maladies in the body, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure! You should always...

- Consider the ergonomics of your workstation. Repetitive movements are not the problem—it is repetitive movement when your muscles and joints are at a disadvantage, leading to repetitive ***strain*** and ***pain***.

- Take regular breaks when your job requires repetitive tasks. During yourbreak periods, a little bit of stretching (of the tight muscles) can go a long way.

- Seek help when the CTS symptoms are just beginning to show up. The earlier you attend to these aches and pains, the better the chances of coming to a quick resolution of this painful condition.

If you start to feel the symptoms of CTS, ***let your chiropractor give you a hand***. Studies have shown chiropractic care to be an effective tool to reduce the symptoms of CTS.[7,8] Your chiropractor will conduct special tests to help determine the cause of the problem, and adjustments delivered right away can help prevent it from becoming a very painful, chronic problem.



Quote to Inspire

"Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice."

Steve Jobs

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