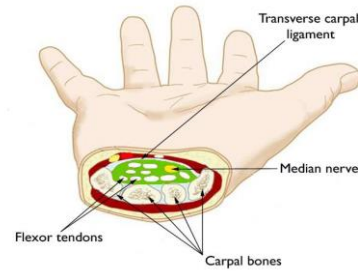


Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS)

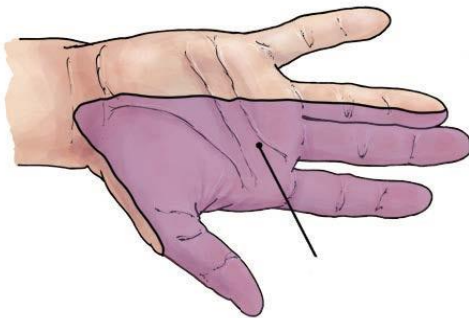
What is the carpal tunnel?

The carpal tunnel is a narrow canal in the wrist. It is about an inch wide. Its sides and floor are formed by the carpal bones and the roof by the transverse carpal ligament. It is quite a taut structure with little capacity to stretch.



What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

It is a condition caused when the median nerve is compressed in the carpal tunnel. Untreated CTS is likely to get worse over time. This makes early diagnosis and treatment vital. **Nerve conduction study** is an objective way of confirming CTS. It also helps grade the degree of compression and thus helps choose the best treatment option.



Part of the hand affected in CTS

Early Symptoms

Tingling
Pins & needles
Pain
Burning

Later Symptoms

Weakness
Pain
Numbness
Dropping things

Early symptoms may occur mainly at night and can sometimes be relieved by wearing a wrist splint or avoiding activities such as heavy lifting or using vibrating tools. In advanced cases surgery may be needed to relieve the pressure on the nerve. A steroid injection given into the wrist can sometimes also help.

Risk factors for CTS

Genetic: A hereditary trait that runs in families and makes the carpal tunnels narrower.

Diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and thyroid disease can predispose to CTS

Pregnancy: Hormonal changes in pregnancy can cause swelling in the carpal tunnel

Repetitive hand use especially if prolonged and involving vibrating tools

Hand and wrist position: Having the wrist in extreme flexion or extension for a prolonged period can lead to CTS.

Sudden excessive **weight** gain or weight loss

Previous **injuries** to the hand and wrist

Splint for CTS

It is available in various sizes and from most high street and online pharmacies. It is to be worn at night for 4-6 weeks.

