

## Wrist Pain--Is It Carpal Tunnel?

Most of the patients I see with wrist pain start off by telling me, "I think I may have carpal tunnel syndrome." Although sometimes they're right, true carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is fairly rare. Let's talk about problem prevention and ways to care for your wrists to keep them healthy.

Here's the first rule of prevention: avoid the offending activity. Typing, using hand tools, racquet sports and weightlifting can often cause wrist pain. If you don't want to, or can't, stop the activity, you'll want to change the way you do it. This means changing the position of the computer, changing how you grip the racquet and/or modifying your technique. This is where a trainer or coach can really help. Often an objective point of view can help you see how your positioning may be off.

Hand, forearm and wrist pain, numbness, burning and tingling can also be caused by problems like a pinched nerve or joint or muscle injury any place from the neck down to the hand. Sometimes the problem is with the forearm muscles. With frequent or repetitive movements of the fingers and wrist, or improper technique, the forearm muscles can become damaged, tight and weak. If uncared for and the activity isn't changed, CTS or tennis elbow can develop.

I recommend that you take a short (1-2 minute) break every hour and also whenever you go to the restroom to stretch and shake out your hands and wrists. A simple stretch is to put your wrists, arms, neck and shoulders in the opposite position they're in during use. You can also do forearm massage (either yourself or ask a friend) to relax the muscles.

If you have symptoms and you're not getting relief from these suggestions, I recommend that you see a musculoskeletal specialist. I have neither seen nor read of many positive results with wrist surgery, so I suggest you make it your very last option. Actually, I find these types of wrist problems relatively easy to care for and prevent--it's rare that I see a true case of CTS.

If you're suffering with wrist pain or have other health questions, I'd be happy to speak with you on Wednesdays from 6:30 to 7:30 at the weight room desk.

Yours in health,

Dr. Rick

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