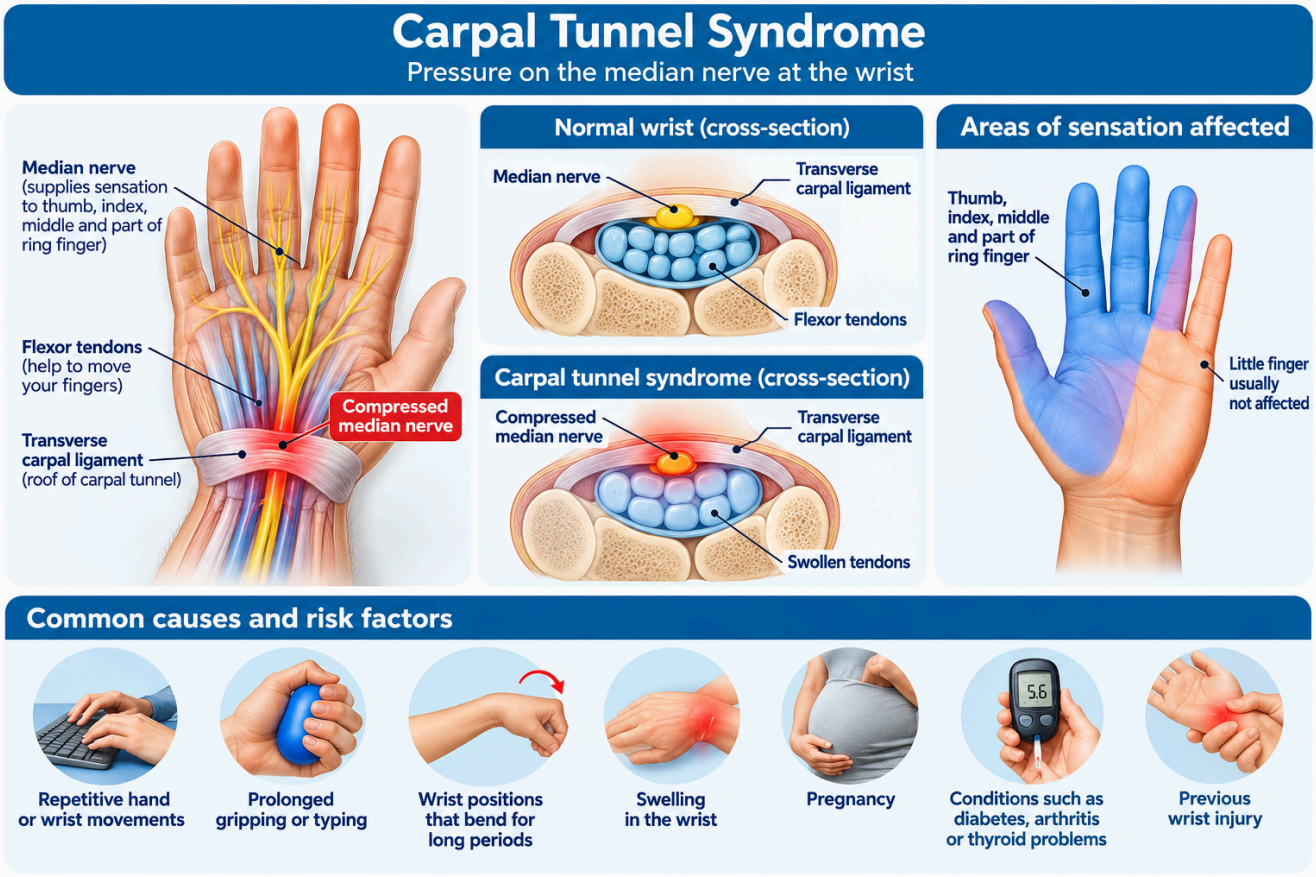
Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Understanding median nerve compression at the wrist

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS)

A guide to symptoms, management and exercises



What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

CTS occurs when the median nerve is compressed as it passes through the carpal tunnel at the wrist. It may cause pain, tingling, numbness and weakness in the hand.

What can cause CTS?

Repetitive wrist movement, prolonged gripping or typing, sustained wrist bending, swelling, pregnancy, certain health conditions or a previous wrist injury.

Causes, symptoms and diagnosis

Recognising the signs and seeking appropriate assessment

Common causes

CTS may develop with repeated hand movements, prolonged gripping or typing, bent wrist positions, swelling or previous wrist injury. Pregnancy, diabetes, arthritis and thyroid problems can also contribute.

Common symptoms

Tingling or numbness in the thumb, index, middle and part of the ring finger; wrist or hand pain that may spread to the forearm; symptoms at night; weakness, clumsiness or dropping objects.

How is CTS diagnosed?

Assessment usually includes symptoms, medical history and a hand and wrist examination. Nerve conduction studies or ultrasound may be used when the diagnosis is unclear or symptoms are severe.

Activity modification

Reduce repetitive tasks, take regular breaks and avoid keeping the wrist bent for long periods. A neutral wrist position may help ease symptoms.

Wrist splint

A night-time wrist splint can help keep the wrist neutral and may reduce symptoms that disturb sleep.

Important information

Seek medical advice if numbness becomes constant, weakness worsens, you frequently drop objects or symptoms do not improve with treatment.

Exercises and rehabilitation

Gentle wrist, finger and nerve movement

Carpal tunnel exercise guide

Your physiotherapist may recommend nerve-gliding exercises, gentle wrist and finger stretches, and selected strengthening exercises. Exercises should not increase pain or numbness.



Exercise safety

Use gentle, controlled movements. Stop if pain or numbness increases; seek individual advice.

Treatment and next steps

Managing symptoms and supporting recovery

1. Activity modification

Reduce aggravating hand and wrist activities, take breaks and avoid prolonged wrist bending.

2. Wrist splint

A night-time splint can keep the wrist in a neutral position and reduce night-time symptoms.

3. Pain relief and physiotherapy

Pain relief may be appropriate for some people. Physiotherapy can include ergonomic advice, gentle gliding exercises and selected stretching or strengthening.

4. Injection or surgery

A corticosteroid injection may help relieve symptoms. Surgery may be considered for severe or worsening symptoms, persistent weakness or numbness, or when other treatments have not helped.

Self-management tips

Keep your wrist in a neutral position, take regular breaks from repetitive tasks, adjust your workstation and continue exercises as advised.

Important information - when to seek help

Seek advice for constant numbness, worsening weakness, frequent dropping of objects or symptoms that persist despite treatment.

B-Well Physiotherapy Services

0300 303 4811

bwell.mskberkshire@nhs.net

www.bwellberkshire.co.uk