Wrist Pain in Adults

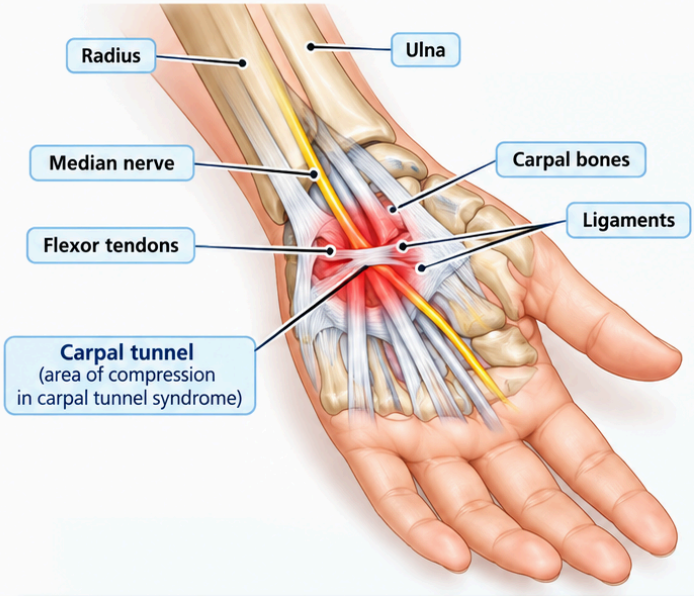
Understanding causes, symptoms and recovery

Wrist Pain: Understanding and Management

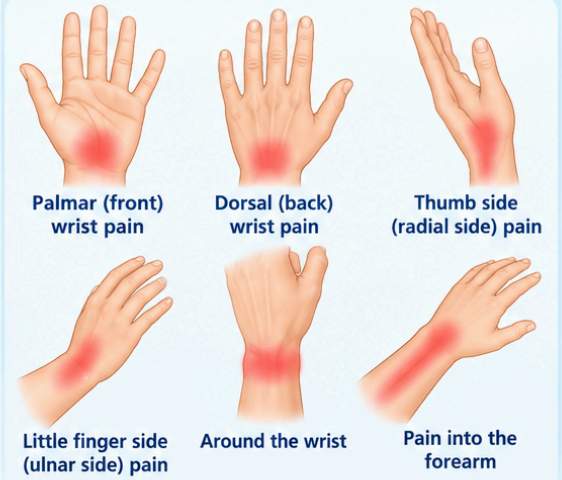
A guide to causes, treatment and exercises

Wrist Pain

Common causes, symptoms and areas affected



Common areas of wrist pain



Common causes of wrist pain

Carpal tunnel syndrome



Compression of the median nerve in the wrist.

Tendonitis (tenosynovitis)



Inflammation of tendons due to overuse.

Arthritis



Wear and tear or inflammatory changes in the joint.

Ganglion cyst



Fluid-filled lump arising from a joint or tendon sheath.

Wrist sprain (or ligament injury)



Stretching or tearing of wrist ligaments.

Fracture



Break in one of the wrist bones (usually after a fall).

Simple steps that may help

Many cases improve with activity modification, gentle movement and physiotherapy. Pace repetitive tasks and seek advice if pain persists or worsens.

Common causes and symptoms

Recognising wrist problems and when to seek assessment

Overuse and sprains

Repetitive movements, strains and sprains may cause pain, stiffness or swelling.

Tendon inflammation

Tendinitis or tenosynovitis can make gripping and wrist movement uncomfortable.

Nerve-related symptoms

Carpal tunnel syndrome may cause numbness or tingling in the hand.

Arthritis or previous injury

Arthritis, previous fractures and other injuries can cause ongoing wrist discomfort.

Common symptoms

Pain or aching, swelling, stiffness, reduced grip, clicking, weakness or tingling.

Assessment and diagnosis

Assessment usually includes symptoms, activity history and an examination. Scans are not always needed.

Important information

Seek medical advice for deformity, significant swelling, persistent numbness or weakness, fever or pain after a fall.

Exercises and rehabilitation

Gentle movement to restore wrist flexibility and strength

Wrist exercise examples

Exercises may help restore movement, improve strength and reduce stiffness. Your physiotherapist can advise which movements are suitable.



Treatment and management

Practical advice and when to seek further help

1. Activity modification

Reduce aggravating activities, take regular breaks and gradually return to normal tasks.

2. Pain relief

Paracetamol or anti-inflammatory medicines may be appropriate for some people. Ice or heat may also help.

3. Wrist support

A wrist support or splint may help during flare-ups; avoid prolonged immobilisation unless advised.

4. Physiotherapy

Wrist and hand exercises, stretching, strengthening, posture and ergonomic advice may support recovery.

Self-care tips

Maintain good posture, use ergonomic equipment, warm up, pace tasks and continue exercises as advised.

Important information - when to seek help

Seek advice if pain worsens, swelling or deformity develops, numbness or weakness persists, or pain follows an injury.

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