

Carpal Tunnel: Truths and Misconceptions

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Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a condition of the wrist and forearm affecting nearly 8 million Americans per year. Women are twice as likely to develop this condition as compared to men. In the United States alone, over 7.4 billion dollars are spent each year treating carpal tunnel syndrome. This dollar amount includes surgery, litigation costs and workers compensation funds, as well as lost productivity of wages and other layers of medical treatments and drugs. Carpal tunnel surgery remains one of the top surgeries each year in the United States with around 230,000 cases yearly. With this many people affected and this condition so prevalent, it might be important to

ask what is carpal tunnel syndrome and why is it such an epidemic in our culture?

I find that most of the medical knowledge about carpal tunnel is severely distorted and slanted in a particular manner. My experience has shown me that most medical professionals remain confused about the origins of carpal tunnel, the exact cause and an appropriate treatment. My observation has concluded that the medical approach to carpal tunnel syndrome is about as backwards as when leeches were regularly used to cure infection and a frontal lobotomy was thought to cure mental illness. In today's age we are not too far off from that approach.

People with carpal tunnel syndrome will suffer from a host of symptoms. Some will have continuous mild to severe sharp pain.

Others will only have pain when the wrist is bent back (extension). Some people will have fluid retention while others will experience weakness or even numbness. The most common treatment for carpal tunnel syndrome is to undergo surgery. During surgery a surgeon will create more space in the gap leading into the wrist (called the carpal tunnel) so that the median nerve is not pressed upon. Other common treatment options include colorful sports tape, physical therapy exercises, either over the counter or prescription drugs and sometimes a wrist brace to stabilize the wrist.



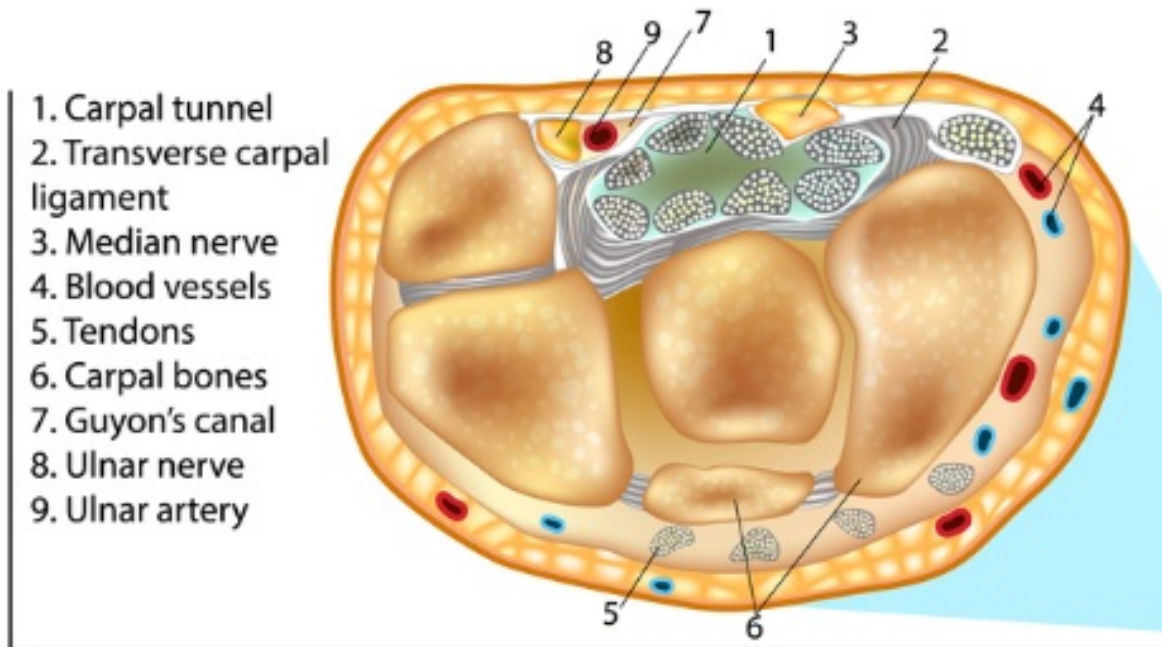
There are many hypothetical reasons why some people develop carpal tunnel syndrome. Some believe that it is workplace ergonomics causing the problem. In other words, let's blame the computer for the problem. If this were really true then everyone who has ever used a computer would have carpal tunnel syndrome. Computer use does not cause carpal tunnel but it may aggravate a pre-existing condition. Changing one's workplace environment, (raising or lowering the chair) might help the condition. Computer use is not an occupational hazard: you bring a pre-existing condition to the occupation.

There can also be a pre-existing trauma still active in the arm. You might have broken

your wrist years earlier and the scar tissue has built up enough over time that now it is pressing on the median nerve in the wrist. This may take years or decades to develop. An injury might have occurred in years past but it might still be very alive and active in your body.

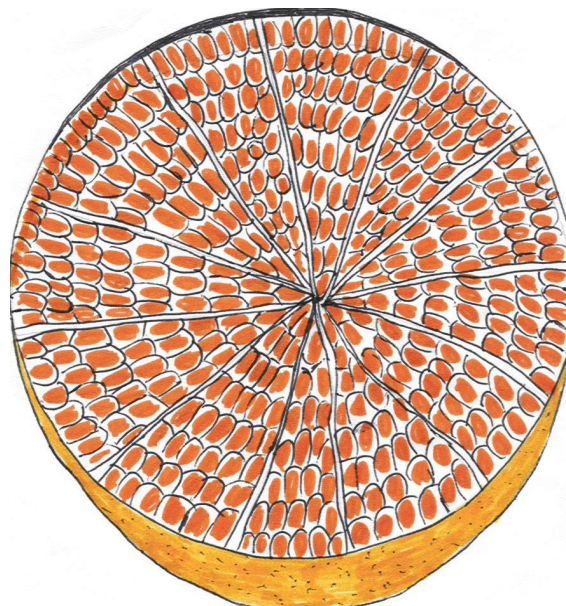
On rare occasions you might have inflammation from a tumor or cyst in the wrist area that is pressing on the nerve. Even rarer is to have a hyperactive pituitary or underactive thyroid gland that leads to swelling in the arm muscles. The rarest of cases occurs when a patient might even have a virus in the median nerve itself causing swelling.





The interesting observation is that while pain is experienced near the wrist area it is usually not the wrist where the problem lies. Almost all carpal tunnel issues begin in the forearm muscles in the belly of the muscle and much closer to the elbow area. The forearm muscles will have trauma in them and will swell. This swelling causes the tendons of the forearms to swell as well leading into the wrist area. When this happens there will not be enough space for the wrist tendons and the nerves leading into the hand to all pass through the carpal tunnel unimpeded. Thus the swelling of the arm muscles causes pinching of the nerve in the wrist. The actual cause of carpal tunnel is not in the wrist at all but in the forearm muscles and medical professionals seldom treat this area.

Once the forearm muscles become hard and inflamed over a length of time the connective tissue (in this case the fascia) will harden and fuse together. This is called *hydrogen bonding*. The fascia is the container for the forearm muscles. Fascia is like the white fibers inside an orange.



It keeps everything contained. When the fascia of the forearms is pulled tight for a long duration it will glue together and become more like a petrified mass rather than healthy soft tissue.

Most people with this condition have had some form of mild to severe carpal tunnel for years or decades, either ignoring the condition or not willing to spend the time or money to get well. Thus the fascia is very well dried out and fused together creating an abundance of forearm swelling.

In my experience there are four main factors that create carpal tunnel syndrome. These factors are the following: 1) Overuse of the forearm muscles, 2) Repression of anger, 3) Unconscious night fear and 4) A pre-existing trauma.

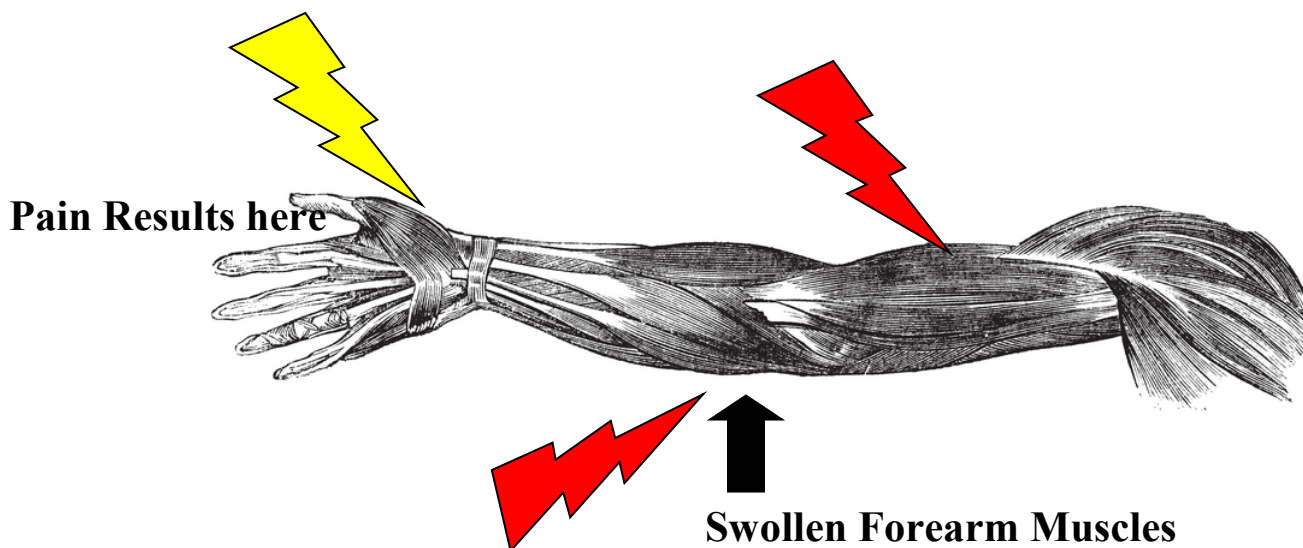
1) Overuse of the forearm muscles most often occurs when you are engaged in a repetitive motion requiring strength or dexterity that occurs over and over again. This might be your job working a jack hammer on a construction site where your forearm muscles are continually straining with the vibration of the hammer. You could be



a carpet installer, tree trimmer or a roofer. The daily motion of your forearms and wrists might be enough to create swelling in the forearms leading to swollen tendons and ultimately pain in your wrist. If you experience pain in your wrists then

simple press on the forearm muscles near the elbow and most likely they will be extremely sore.

It does not have to be just a job or occupation that causes forearm problems leading into carpal tunnel syndrome. Many people with hobbies like sewing or knitting might also develop this condition. The repetitive action over time will create enough swollen forearm muscles to eventually create inflamed nerves in the wrist joint.



The second primary cause of carpal tunnel syndrome stems from the repression of emotions like anger. This might help to explain why women are more prone to carpal tunnel syndrome than men. Muscles are used to express emotion and they are also used to repress or hold back emotion. A man who is angry has more social leeway to express his anger. This could be through accepted means like sports or through unaccepted ways like violent outbursts. He might punch a punching bag at the gym or hit a golf ball to relieve some of his bursts of anger.

Women have less freedom to express anger in our culture. A woman who is angry is often labeled as a "bitch" or one with mental issues. Women often must control or hold back their anger. Hence, women often tighten up their fists in rage as if they want to lash out at someone but never ever do so. The energy of anger just backs up into their arms resulting in swollen arm muscles. This is no different than someone who has refused to cry. A man or woman who refuses to cry will have a tremendous amount of tension and sunkeness around their eyes as they use their own muscles to hold back the natural flow of emotions. When you hold back emotions like anger in your arms the muscles often begin to swell.

The fascia (and all connective tissue) is the energetic pathway that "chi" flows through the body. Chi is an anatomical concept that comes to us from the East but exists in all of us. The best way to describe chi is that it is like an electrical surge that passes through the body. When the fascia is healthy the chi flows smoothly and unimpeded. When the fascia is hard and dried out the chi flow is diminished or stopped altogether. When chi flow is stopped the physical cells of the body are negatively affected.

The third way that carpal tunnel manifests is when we are asleep. Most Americans were not raised with natural concepts in

place but were raised instead by very scientific and unnatural principles. We were removed to our room or crib at night to be alone and cry ourselves to sleep. Fighting back the tears we also clinched our jaws, tightened our eyes, neck and our fists. This is referred to as the "turtle complex". When we are scared we often pull ourselves in tighter, like a turtle pulling its head into its shell. We draw our energy inward into our core for our own self-protection. This pattern stays in place even when we grow into adulthood. As we are sleeping we are often clenching our fists while causing great strain in our forearm muscles. This repetitive clenching is the beginning of carpal tunnel syndrome for many.

The final way that some develop carpal tunnel syndrome is due to a left-over trauma that never gets resolved. For instance, you might have been in a car accident many years before where you were clenching at the steering wheel throughout the entire accident. Even after the accident you are still clenching as if your nervous system remains stuck in that mode and continues to hold on tightly. After years of this constant tightness the forearm muscles will fuse together as the fascia hardens around them. Eventually the swelling will reach the tendons passing through the carpal tunnel near the wrist and pinch on the median nerve.

How to heal from *Carpal Tunnel Syndrome*

While surgery is the most common way to correct carpal tunnel it never addresses the true cause (swollen forearm muscles) and many people will have to endure repeated surgeries later on to keep the impinged nerve free. There are other natural solutions that can alleviate the problem forever.

Most natural healing takes time, patience and persistence. You must do enough of the right kind of things long enough to achieve success. Healing from carpal tunnel syndrome is no different. If you suffer from a mild case you might be able to heal it in a couple of weeks. A medium incident that has persisted for a while might take several months of treatment. A severe case of carpal tunnel might take a year or two of consistent treatment in order to heal it. The longer you have had this condition the more petrified the muscles and connective tissue and the longer it will take to bring it back to balance.

A moist heat pad is a good way to start. Applied regularly it helps to bring circulation to the area. While a wrist splint will help in pain management it will not cure your issue. Natural ointments like arnica might be a good starting point as well.

I find that the most effective treatment is to first perform several sessions of connective tissue bodywork on the forearm muscles. These muscles have become so petrified and fused together that they have turned from healthy tissue into rubbery and stone like masses. This first needs to change. A professional connective tissue

body worker is needed for this procedure. After several sessions of connective tissue bodywork I would follow with gentle massage using essential oils like lemon, birch, lavender and peppermint. This helps to increase the circulation in order to bring the muscles back to life and reduce the inflammatory response. Over time these procedures will bring life back to swollen and petrified arm muscles and tendons allowing balance to ensue in the wrist and forearm.

In Summery

Carpal tunnel syndrome is usually about the forearm muscles and not about the wrist. If you just perform surgery on the wrist without correcting the underlying condition (swollen forearm muscles) you will probably have to repeat the surgery several times more.

Healing is possible without surgery. Many people want a quick fix. Natural healing is not like that but is steady and consistent. It often require time, money and patience.

Emotions are often stuck in the connective tissue. The stories of our lives remain in the cells of our bodies. Every emotion that you have never let go of is most likely still trapped in your muscles and connective tissue.

You do not have to live and suffer with carpal tunnel syndrome forever. You do have to take proactive measures in order to cure it.

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