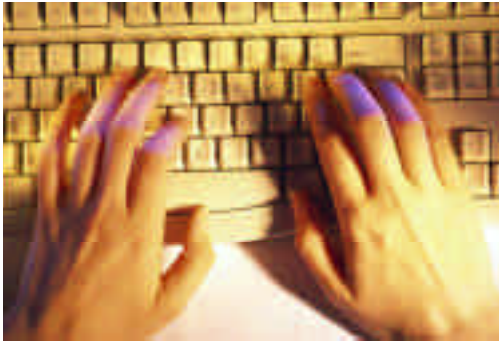


# Understanding Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

---



Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is a term that refers to nerve compression in the wrist that results in pain, a burning sensation, numbness, and tingling in the wrist, hand, and/or fingers. Any activity that causes a repetitive movement (such as typing), awkward or uncomfortable posture, extremes of wrist position, direct pressure on the heel of the hand, or vibration may put someone at risk for developing carpal tunnel syndrome. Carpal tunnel also is associated with other medical conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, and pregnancy. People with carpal tunnel syndrome often complain of their hands “falling asleep.”

Because carpal tunnel syndrome affects use of the hands, a person may have difficulty with typical daily activities at home, such as dressing, grooming, and cooking; and activities at work, such as using the phone or computer. Occupational therapy practitioners help people with carpal tunnel to function in their home, work, and leisure environments.

## What can an occupational therapist do?

- **Evaluate** a person complaining of wrist pain or tingling.
- **Collaborate** with other health care professionals who may have referred someone to an occupational therapist for evaluation.
- **Recommend** assistive devices and ergonomically correct devices to reduce repetitive motion.
- **Facilitate** range of motion, endurance, and dexterity in the fingers and hands to make daily activities easier.
- **Educate** the person in postural and conditioning exercises that may reduce the symptoms.

## What can a person with carpal tunnel syndrome do?

- **Follow** recommendations by the occupational therapist, such as work simplification techniques.
- **Use** proper body mechanics in lifting and carrying.
- **Allocate** some household responsibilities to others in the household.

---

## Need more information?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a serious disorder that can affect many aspects of a person’s life, including work and leisure activities. If you would like to consult an occupational therapist, practitioners are available through most hospitals, medical centers, and clinics. Talk to your physician or contact your local health officials for more information about how occupational therapy can help your health needs.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants are trained in helping people with a broad range of physical, developmental, and behavioral conditions. In addition to treating illness and disability, occupational therapy encourages wellness through a balance of healthy and meaningful life activities.