

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome: What You Need to Know

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If you have been diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome, here are several facts you should know about your condition:

1 This problem is caused by pressure on an important nerve in your wrist, called the **median nerve**. This nerve usually gives feeling to the thumb, pointer, middle, and part of the ring finger.

2 Symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome:

- Numbness
- Tingling
- Burning
- Electricity sensations
- Pain
- Dropping things
- Shaking hands out
- Waking up at night
- Weakness
- Worse with holding steering wheel, repetitive movements, power tools, and vibration



3 **If your symptoms are very mild** and recently started, your primary care doctor or hand doctor may recommend wearing a splint at night or simply avoiding activities that cause the symptoms. It is **not recommended** to wear splints during the day for carpal tunnel syndrome.

4 Sometimes **if the diagnosis is unclear**, your doctor may obtain **nerve studies** or perform an **injection** to confirm the diagnosis. While a steroid injection may make your symptoms better for a while, it is unlikely to cure the carpal tunnel syndrome forever, and your symptoms will likely come back.

5 It is **NOT RECOMMENDED to live with severe carpal tunnel syndrome**. Doing so may lead to permanent problems with the carpal tunnel nerve, which can cause permanent (not reversible) numbness, weakness, and poor coordination

6 When carpal tunnel syndrome does not resolve and remains severe (waking up every night, frequently shaking hands out, or losing sensation in fingertips), then Dr. Nelson will likely recommend a **carpal tunnel release**.

- The surgery is outpatient, meaning **you will go home right after the surgery** is performed.
- Carpal tunnel release can be performed with an open incision or with "less invasive" methods like **endoscopic** or **ultrasound-guided**
- The surgery can be performed with you **wide awake**, much like going to the dentist, or you can have **sleeping medicine** administered to relax you during the procedure. Usually ultrasound-guided release is performed wide awake.
- Dr. Nelson usually applies a **soft bandage** that is kept in place for **two days**, which is removed and you can begin showering and washing your hand again.
- Dr. Nelson usually uses absorbable sutures, meaning you will not need to have any sutures removed. No sutures are used on ultrasound-guided releases.
- You can go back to **light activities on the day of surgery** (eating, typing, food preparation), but may need to wait 5-7 days for before you do heavy gripping (yard work, lifting weights).

