

Carpal tunnel syndrome: treatment options

Use this decision aid to help you and your healthcare professional talk about how best to treat your carpal tunnel syndrome. Carpal tunnel syndrome causes pain, tingling, weakness and numbness in hands and fingers.

Frequently Asked Questions ↓	Splinting and exercises	Local steroid injection	Surgery
What does this treatment involve?	Wearing a splint to hold your wrist in place so that there is less pressure on the nerve. You wear a splint regularly for roughly six weeks. You can also try hand motion exercises or yoga.	A doctor injects a small amount of steroid into your wrist to help lower swelling and pressure on the nerve.	Surgery on the palm side of your wrist to lower pressure on the nerve. It is an outpatient surgery, and you will be given medication to numb the area beforehand.
For whom does this treatment work best?	People with mild to moderate symptoms, such as problems noticed during sleep.	People with mild to moderate symptoms, such as problems noticed during sleep.	People with moderate to serious symptoms, such as problems noticed all the time.
What are the advantages?	Splints are inexpensive, easy and safe. You can choose when to wear your splint.	Steroid injections can be done during a normal doctor's appointment. People usually feel better after one injection.	Surgery works well for about 95 out of every 100 people (95%).
What are the disadvantages?	Wearing a splint can be inconvenient. Usually, you only feel better for a short amount of time before symptoms come back.	Steroid injections will probably help you feel better, but your symptoms will likely come back after a few months.	You may need to stop working for two weeks or so. You may continue to feel weakness and numbness in your hand, especially if you've had carpal tunnel syndrome for a long time. Sometimes, surgery doesn't work because the nerve is too damaged.
What are the risks?	No risks	Serious problems are rare. The injection can be painful, and you may feel numbness and tingling in your hand for a short time.	Up to 5 out of every 100 people (5%) may still have problems after surgery. The pain, numbness or weakness in your hand can stay the same or get worse after surgery.
How long before I can use my hand again?	No delay	You can usually return to work the day of the injection.	You can use your hand for light activities roughly two weeks after surgery. It may take three weeks or more before you can do more intense activities.
Will I feel better?	You may feel better and have no symptoms for 3 months or more.	You may feel better and have no symptoms for 4 months or more.	You will likely feel better and most of your symptoms will go away. Symptoms do not come back very often.

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