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Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

- Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common, painful disorder of the wrist and hand.

How does carpal tunnel syndrome occur?

- Carpal tunnel syndrome is caused by pressure on the median nerve in your wrist. People who use their hands and wrists repeatedly in the same way tend to develop carpal tunnel syndrome. Pressure on the nerve may also be caused by another injury which may cause inflammation and swelling. In addition, pressure may be caused by inflammation associated with arthritis, diabetes, and hypothyroidism. Carpal tunnel syndrome can also occur during pregnancy.

What are the symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome?

- Symptoms include pain, numbness, and tingling in your hand and wrist, especially in the thumb, index, and middle fingers. Pain may radiate up into the forearm. Other symptoms include increased pain with increased use of the hand, increased pain at night, weak grip and tendency to drop objects, sensitivity to cold, and muscle deterioration in later stages.

How is a carpal tunnel syndrome diagnosed?

- Your doctor will review your symptoms, examine you, and discuss ways you use your hands. He may order a nerve study to test the response of the nerves and muscles to electrical stimulation.

How is a carpal tunnel syndrome treated?

- Treatment of carpal tunnel syndrome focuses on relieving irritation and pressure on the nerve in your wrist, such as: restricting use of your hand, wearing a wrist splint, or home exercises. Your doctor may also prescribe anti-inflammatory medications or recommend a cortisone injection. In some cases, a surgical procedure called a carpal tunnel release may be necessary.
- Home treatment may include elevating your arm while laying down, avoid activities that overuse your hand, find different ways to use your hands, and avoid bending your wrist for long periods of time.