

# Health and Wellness Tip of the Week - Week 10

## Monthly Topic

March is *Workplace Safety Month*. It's the perfect time to remind employees about the importance of maintaining a safe and healthy work environment.

March 9, 2015

## Helping Your Wrists Resist Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

You've probably heard of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS), but what is it exactly, and what can you do to prevent it? Simply stated, CTS develops when a large nerve — the median nerve — is compressed inside your wrist. This nerve controls feeling in most of your hand. The condition gets its name from the eight carpal bones that form the base and sides of the tunnel in your wrist. The tunnel is very small, so anything that makes it smaller, or makes the tendons that pass through it larger, makes pressure build up. This cuts off circulation to the nerve resulting in pain, numbness and tingling in the fingers, the classic symptoms of CTS.

CTS affects about three out of every 100 people in the United States, and most are middle-aged women. Obesity also increases the risk of CTS with research showing that every 6 pounds of weight gain increases the risk of CTS by 8 percent. About 25 percent to 50 percent of people who have CTS have it in both hands.

### Good rules of thumb to follow

CTS isn't usually a work-related condition. Many times it develops without a specific cause or for reasons unrelated to work. And while there are no proven strategies to prevent the condition, there are some steps you can take to protect yourself from a variety of ailments, such as:

- ✿ Reducing force used to perform tasks and relaxing your grip, like when using a pen
- ✿ Taking frequent breaks to give your hands and wrists a rest, and gently stretching and bending them
- ✿ Watching your form and avoiding bending your wrist all the way up or down
- ✿ Improving posture to keep shoulders from rolling forward, which compresses nerves in your neck and can affect your wrists, fingers and hands
- ✿ Keeping your hands warm to control hand pain and stiffness

If you have symptoms of CTS, aspirin or other over-the-counter NSAIDs may provide temporary relief. Also, consider wearing a wrist splint at night to help ease pain or numbness in your wrists and hands. The splint should be snug but not tight. Should pain, numbness or weakness recur or persist, see your doctor for more advice and help.

*Source: Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research*



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