

Understanding Carpal Tunnel Syndrome: Prevention and Remedies

For many people, using the computer is an essential part of work. Long-term use of the keyboard and mouse can cause hand discomfort and even result in carpal tunnel syndrome.

Causes and Symptoms

The carpal tunnel is a narrow space inside the wrist. Repetitive wrist work, such as typing and using the mouse, will easily lead to inflammation and swelling of the tendons in the carpal tunnel, thereby narrowing the space in the carpal tunnel and compressing the median nerve. This causes pain or numbness in the thumb, index finger, middle finger and half of the ring finger.

Other high risk factors of carpal tunnel syndrome include frequent use of smartphones, diabetes, arthritis and wrist fracture.

The symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome may aggravate at night, and the numbness is more intense when patients bend their wrist or make a fist. In severe cases, the symptoms extend to the elbow or shoulder, and thenar atrophy may occur.

Prevention

- While using the computer, the keyboard and mouse should be at elbow height or slightly lower. Sit upright, but keep your shoulders and back relaxed. Do not slouch.
- While using the mouse, do not hang your arm in the air. Use a soft wrist pad to reduce pressure on the wrist.
- While using the keyboard and mouse, type and click gently.
- Allow your hands to rest at appropriate times. For example, you can leave your desk for a 5-minute break after working for 30 minutes. It is even better if you can do some stretching exercises during the break.
- Use an ergonomic keyboard or mouse to adjust wrist angle.
- If the discomfort persists, you should seek medical advice or consult a professional (e.g. a physiotherapist) as soon as possible to prevent the condition from getting worse.

Stretching Exercises

It is advisable to perform the following stretching exercises 3 times per day, with 3 to 5 repetitions of each. Hold for about 15 seconds for each repetition.

- Straighten one arm out with the palm facing outwards. Bend your wrist backwards as much as possible.



- Straighten one arm out with the palm facing inwards. Bend your wrist downwards as much as possible.



- Straighten one arm out. Make a fist with your thumb tucked inside, then slowly bend your wrist downwards.

