

Health Connection

Your Good Health Newsletter

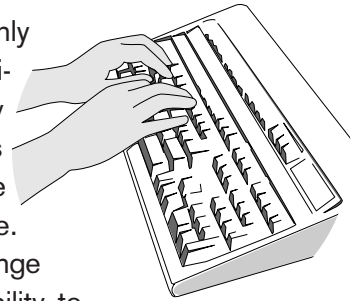
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Managing Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

by Patricia Pelc, Occupational Therapist/Certified Hand Therapist
Department of Rehabilitative Services

Carpal tunnel syndrome is one of the more commonly known repetitive stress injuries. Although the precipitating cause may sometimes be unclear, we do know that it is a compression of the median nerve as it passes through the wrist. This compression may lead to uncomfortable feelings of numbness, tingling, hand cramping or hand fatigue. These symptoms may range from minor to severe and may change over time. Furthermore, these symptoms may affect your ability to sustain prolonged activities such as handwriting, typing, or even simply getting dressed in the morning.



When an individual is diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome, occupational therapists and physical therapists at the Hospital for Special Surgery encourage six principles of management to control these symptoms.

Rest

- Be sure to build in rest periods for all your activities. Because the muscles of the hand are small, prolonged activity will lead to fatigue and strain.
- Sometimes a doctor may recommend a splint to wear while sleeping. This helps to ensure limited movement of your wrist as well as a nice neutral position of your wrist while you sleep.

Avoid static wrist flexion/extension postures

- Doing activities with your wrist flexed or extended will increase the pressure in the carpal tunnel and contribute to your aggravating symptoms.

Avoid repetitive wrist movements

- The median nerve is not the only structure running through the carpal tunnel. Many of the tendons that move your wrist and fingers also course through the tunnel. Therefore, repetitive movements by these tendons can increase the pressure in the carpal tunnel and lead to aggravating symptoms.

Maintain proper body mechanics and posture

- The median nerve exits the spinal cord at the level of the cervical spine in your neck and branches off a large nerve network around your shoulder called the Brachial Plexus. Because the nerve crosses many joints, it is important to maintain proper posture to keep the entire length of the nerve healthy. In general, proper posture when sitting or standing is when your earlobes, shoulders, and hips are in line with each other.

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Affiliated Physician Offices

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Managing Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (continued)

Employ the use of good ergonomics for your workstations

- A good ergonomic workstation will make it easy to maintain proper posture and promote the use of healthy positions for your upper extremity.

Maintain overall health and fitness

- For overall health and fitness, it is important to keep muscle

tissue strong and healthy to help support your upper extremities during all activities.

If you have symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome and have not been diagnosed, it is important to report these symptoms to your doctor.

↳ Did you know that...

For the 13th year in a row, Hospital for Special Surgery has been ranked number one in the Northeast in Orthopaedics and Rheumatology in the latest *U.S. News & World Report* "America's Best Hospitals" publication.

From the Editor

NEWS AND VIEWS

On-the-Job Health Mistakes

It should come as no surprise that Americans are spending more and more time on-the-job. According to the International Labor Organization, in 2000, the average American worked 1,978 hours — up from 1,942 hours in 1990. That represents an increase of almost a week of work. Most workers are guilty of making at least one of these on-the-job health mistakes. Start today—turn the following health mistakes into healthy habits.

Health Mistake #1

Not washing your hands

Regular hand washing does wonders to prevent infection and washing your hands is the best way to stop germs from spreading.

> Healthy Habit

Always wash your hands after using the restroom and before eating or handling food.

Health Mistake #2

Not taking time out to relax

Always take time out for short breaks to help reduce stress and improve your overall health and well being. Short breaks can help prevent the headaches and other physical ailments that often result from high levels of on-the-job stress.

> Healthy Habit

Take short, frequent breaks to rest muscles and improve your physical and mental state.

Health Mistake #3

Not staying mobile

Walking conditions the heart and lungs and increases your body's ability to fight off illness. Many workers spend so much time behind a desk that they forget the importance of

staying mobile for physical well being.

> Healthy Habit

Even if it is simply a walk to the copy machine or the mailroom, just 10 minutes of walking is exercise for your muscles and will help make up for movement lost while sitting at your desk.

Health Mistake #4

Not eating breakfast

It is common knowledge that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Research suggests that learning, decision making and memory can decrease without the proper amount of food intake throughout the day.

> Healthy Habit

Grab a granola bar, a cup of yogurt, or a piece of fruit for that instant morning pick-me-up!

Chandler Wilson

Healthy Lunch Break Options

by Leah Crawford, MS, RD, CDN, Department of Nutrition Services

We are constantly in a rush and pressed for time. Many of us have schedules that do not allow enough time to eat during lunch breaks. When we do have those few extra minutes, we opt for the convenience of fast food. Unfortunately, the foods we choose are not always the healthiest.

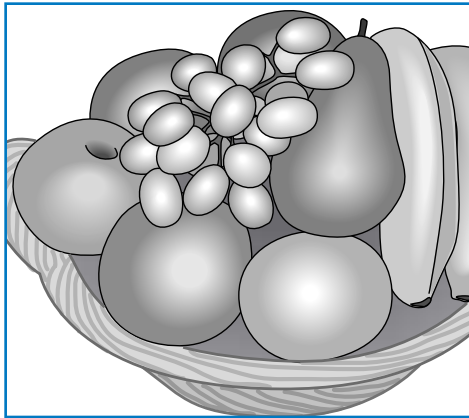
Lunch is a very important meal. By eating a healthy mid-day meal, you can avoid the afternoon slump and be more productive until the end of the day. Skipping meals will not save you any calories. It just makes you hungrier and more likely to overeat later. Spreading your food intake throughout the day is the best way to use calories most efficiently.

A well-balanced diet consists of plenty of fruits and vegetables; a variety of whole grain products; lean meats, poultry, fish, legumes or meat alternatives; low-fat dairy products; and adequate water intake. Include at least one serving from each of the food groups represented in the Food Guide Pyramid at each meal.

Healthy eating takes some planning. The benefits will definitely outweigh the few minutes it takes to plan your meals. Packing your lunch will not only save calories; it may save you money too! Make a list of what you need at the grocery store; this may prevent you from buying unnecessary purchases, like high fat or high sugar snacks. Prepare your

lunch the night before, if you don't have enough time in the morning.

Make sure that your lunches have variety. By experimenting with new foods, your meals will be more exciting and appealing. Instead of plain white bread, try whole grain products for more fiber, vitamins and minerals. For protein sources, choose lean meats like roast beef, chicken and turkey. Fruits and vegetables are fast and easy to prepare and packed with vitamins, minerals and fiber. Dairy



products are a good source of calcium and vitamin D as well as protein. Fat free or 1% milk is a healthy beverage choice. Yogurt is available in a variety of flavors. Add a slice of cheese to a sandwich or have string

cheese in addition to your meal.

Try these healthy lunch ideas:

- Top a mixed fruit salad with cottage cheese or yogurt. Complete with wheat crackers and carrot sticks.
- Try a small whole-wheat tortilla with turkey, low-fat cheese, sprouts, tomatoes, and Dijon mustard. Add an apple for dessert.
- Throw together grilled chicken breast and a mixed green salad with low-fat dressing. Eat with a whole grain roll and grapes.
- Fill a whole-wheat pita with hummus, cucumbers, sprouts, and tomatoes, and have strawberries and low fat vanilla yogurt as a sweet treat.

If you must have fast food or take out, here are a few healthier options: a deli or submarine sandwich with low-fat meat, cheese, vegetables and mustard; a slice of pizza with vegetable topping; a grilled chicken sandwich with a side salad.

Take a walk if there is time to spare. Remember that 30-45 minutes of moderate physical activity is recommended 3-5 days a week. You can do this all at once or in spurts throughout the day. Exercise and a balanced diet are essential for good health!



Hospital for Special Surgery's Public and Patient Education Department offers ongoing exercises classes, each designed to revitalize, restore and replenish mind, body and spirit.

Contact the Education Division at **212.606.1057** for further information on the following exercise classes:

- T'ai Chi Chih®
- Gentle Yoga for Wellness
- Yoga-lates
- Beginners Pilates Mat Class

From the Studio

“ I did not know anything about Pilates, but I am glad that I was introduced to it. I am now a firm believer and convert and will take more courses. ”

- Edward Chapin, Beginners Pilates Mat Class participant

The Flu Vaccine: Is It Right For You?

by Ann Bienstock, RN, Department of Occupational Health Services

Every winter you or someone close to you will develop the flu. We are all familiar with the symptoms-headache, dry cough, body aches, fever and sore throat. The impact of the flu is astounding. Every winter, 10 to 20 percent of the population will get influenza, and according to the National Center for Health Statistics, approximately 192 million days will be spent in bed because of the flu. In addition, 114,000 people in the U.S. are hospitalized and about 20,000 people die because of the flu. Most who die are over 65 years old, but children between the ages of 6 to 23 months are just as likely to be hospitalized because of the flu. However, the flu can be prevented and needless suffering avoided by simply taking the flu vaccine.

Is the Vaccine for You?

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), you should get the flu vaccine if you or someone you live with falls into one or more of the following categories:

- You are 50 years of age or older.
- You have diabetes.
- You have immune system disorders.
- You will be more than three months pregnant during flu season.
- You have a severe form of anemia.
- You live in a nursing home or other long-term care facility.
- You have chronic diseases of the heart, lung or kidneys (including children with asthma).
- Health care workers and volunteers who work with patients in the above groups should get the vaccine.



- Children and teenagers (6 months to 18 years) should be immunized if they are receiving long-term aspirin treatment, because they can be at risk for developing Reye's syndrome from a flu infection.

Finally, anyone who wishes to avoid the needless suffering and complications of the flu should take the shot. Also, taking the shot will protect everyone you come into contact with, particularly those at high risk of complications from getting the disease.

When Should You Get the Vaccine?

- The CDC recommends taking the vaccine every year between September and November.

Can the Shot Give Me the Flu?

- No. The vaccine is made from dead viruses and cannot give you the flu.

Are the Side Effects Worse Than the Flu?

- The most common side effect is soreness at the site of injection. Some people may develop flu-like symptoms, but it is far less than having the flu and usually lasts for a day.

Can I Still Get the Flu Even If I Get the Shot?

- The shot will protect most people. You can still get other viruses that cause illnesses that resemble the flu.

Can Everyone Take the Shot?

- Unless you are allergic to eggs, which are used to make the vaccine, have a high fever or have previously had a severe reaction to the vaccine, you should be able to take the shot.

So, do not forget to make an appointment with your doctor for a flu vaccination. **Remember that you need to have a flu shot each year to protect yourself from the flu.**

.....
on-the-job.
be exposed to hazardous substances
all employees be trained should they
#5/a True. It is required by law that
back).
#4/b The lumbar region (lower
typist.
keyboard is angled away from the
lower keyboard is appropriate if the
the desk may cut into the forearm. A
higher than the elbow, the edge of
flexion or extension. If the keyboard is
straight with no vertical or horizontal
#3/a True. The wrist should be
height or slightly above the keyboard.
near the keyboard at the same
#2/a The mouse should be placed
most on-the-job injuries to young people.
aunts, grocery stores, etc., report the
#1/b The service industry, including rest-

Answers:

Workplace Health & Safety Quiz

Workplace Health & Safety Quiz: Do You Know The Facts?

There's no time like the present to become more aware of workplace health and safety issues to protect yourself and fellow workers. Answer these questions, and test your knowledge of these workplace health and safety concerns.

- #1** The majority of injuries to young people on-the-job take place in which industry?
- a. Automobile
 - b. Service
 - c. Health Care

- #2** How should the mouse be positioned in relation to the keyboard for a proper computer workstation?
- a. Near the keyboard at the same height or slightly above the keyboard
 - b. Right next to the monitor
 - c. On the desk above the keyboard

- #3** The keyboard should be roughly at elbow height when seated.
- a. True
 - b. False

- #4** Your chair should be adjusted to at least provide support to what part of the back?
- a. The middle of the back
 - b. The lumbar region
 - c. The shoulder blades



- #5** Your boss is required by law to train you should you be exposed or likely to be exposed to a hazardous substance.
- a. True
 - b. False

See page 4 for answers

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) established seven **National Patient Safety Goals** designed to help improve patient care:

- Improve the accuracy of patient identification.
- Improve the effectiveness of communication among care givers.
- Improve the safety of using high-alert medications.
- Eliminate wrong-site, wrong-patient, wrong-procedure surgery.
- Improve the safety of using infusion pumps.
- Improve the effectiveness of clinical alarm systems
- Reduce the risk of health care-acquired infections.



The Amputee Coalition of America (ACA) is the Nation's leading source for education, support and advocacy for people affected by limb loss. The ACA represents more than 1.5 million Americans who are missing limbs, including individuals, local, support groups, allied disability agencies, professionals, families and service providers. To receive a free packet of ACA patient education materials, contact the Education Division at **212.606.1057** or via email: education@hss.edu



We are happy to announce that both the summer and winter 2002 editions of *HealthConnection* were awarded National Health Information Awards. The competition honors the Nation's best consumer health information programs and materials. Close to 1,100 entries were submitted by a wide array of leading consumer health organizations including the Mayo Clinic and Harvard Medical School. The most comprehensive awards program of its kind, the 10th annual National Health Information Awards is organized by the Health Information Resource Center, a national clearinghouse for consumer health information programs and materials.



**Department of
Rehabilitation
Services**
212.606.1358

**Occupational Safety and
Health Administration**

www.osha.org

**Centers for Disease Control
National Institute for
Occupational Safety and Health**

www.cdc.gov/niosh

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Hospital for Special Surgery offers
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609.896.9190
- Princeton Office
609.683.5500
- Marlboro Office
732.946.2100

Connecticut

- Greenwich Office
203.698.8887

The Education Division's Public and Patient Education Department provides information to the general public and patients through a variety of health education programs. Professionals provide practical information to help prevent or manage health problems related to different types of arthritis or orthopaedic problems. Programs are held at the hospital as well as in the community. The department is dedicated to providing education today, so that everyone can have a healthier tomorrow.

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Layout

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