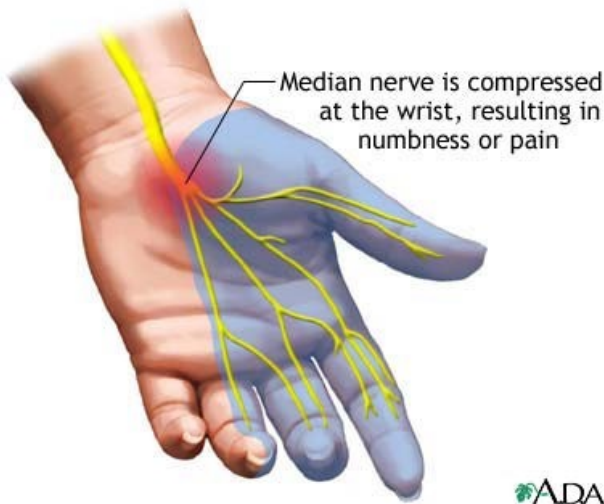


The Spinal Column

My Wrists are on Fire!

By Dawn Rockall, R.M.T.



What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

Carpus is a word derived from the Greek word "karpos" which means "wrist." The wrist is made up of 2 rows of 4 pebble like bones call carpal bones. These bones are surrounded by a band of fibrous tissue called the retinaculum which normally functions as a support for the joint. The tight space between this fibrous band and the wrist bones is called the carpal tunnel. The median nerve passes through the carpal tunnel to receive sensations from the thumb, index, and middle fingers of the hand. Any condition that causes swelling or a change in position of the tissue within the carpal tunnel can squeeze and irritate the median nerve. Irritation of the median nerve in this manner causes tingling and numbness of the thumb, index, and the middle fingers.

What contributes to carpal tunnel syndrome?

Any condition that exerts pressure on the median nerve at the wrist can cause carpal tunnel syndrome. Repetitive strain injuries are the most common causes of CTS. Other contributing factors include thickening of the retinaculum due to scar tissue from repeated trauma as well as systemic conditions that result in swelling and fluid retention in the wrist and hand such as pregnancy & diabetes.

What does someone with Carpal Tunnel feel?

CTS is seen in approximately one per cent of the population. People with carpal tunnel syndrome initially feel numbness and tingling of the hand in the distribution of the median nerve (the thumb, index, middle, and part of the fourth fingers). The condition is aggravated by movement, which causes pain in the hands and wrists. These sensations are often more pronounced at night and can awaken sufferers from sleep. The reason symptoms are worse at night may be related to the flexed-wrist sleeping position of the hands and/or fluid accumulating around the wrist and hand while lying flat. Carpal tunnel syndrome may be a temporary condition that completely resolves or it can persist. As the condition progresses there is thenar muscle wasting that can lead to weakness and clumsiness of the thumb and fingers.

Treatment of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome:

Massage Therapy can be used in the treatment and prevention of CTS. The RMT takes into consideration the actual cause of the problem and modifies the techniques and other modalities to treat the issues. The RMT can also address the swelling, tissue restrictions, increase the muscle tone and joint range of motion, release trigger points and reduce stress the client may be experiencing to give great symptomatic relief.

Chiropractic Doctors can treat CTS with manual wrist adjustments and TENS or Ultrasound machines.

Naturopathic Doctors can help treat the conditions and diseases that may contribute to CTS such as diabetes, pregnancy, hypothyroidism and rheumatoid arthritis.

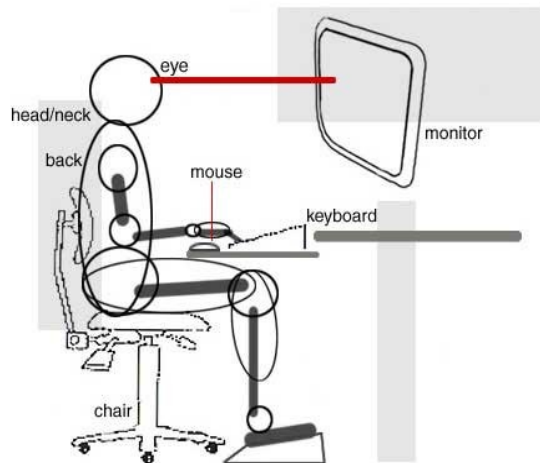
Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs

In some circumstances, various drugs can ease the pain and swelling associated with carpal tunnel syndrome. Drugs, such as aspirin, ibuprofen, and other nonprescription pain relievers, may ease symptoms that have been present for a short time or have been caused by strenuous activity.

Surgery

Carpal tunnel release is one of the most common surgical procedures in Canada. Generally recommended if symptoms last for 6 months, surgery involves severing the band of tissue around the wrist to reduce pressure on the median nerve.

Ergonomics is the study of how the body interacts with the environment when a task or activity is being performed. Office ergonomics focuses on arranging the work environment to fit the workers needs while they do their job. When a workstation is set up properly there is less risk of developing carpal tunnel syndrome. Whether or not a workstation is causing physical problems, a workstation that is properly set up can increase productivity and quality of work life.

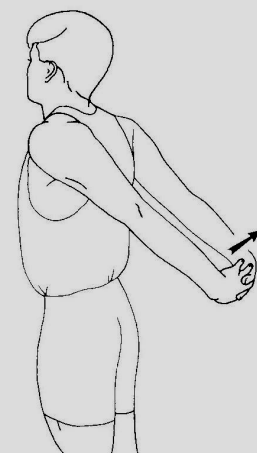


Hydrotherapy such as an ice compress can be used to treat CTS in the acute stage to reduce swelling and pain. Heat can be applied in the chronic stages to soften the tissues and soothe ache muscles.

Stretching can be used as an excellent way to reduce and prevent carpal tunnel syndrome. Stretching can be performed throughout the day and at night before going to sleep. When stretching, a gentle pull should be felt in the muscle that is being stretched. There should be no pain. Each stretch should be held for 30 seconds and repeated if necessary. For more information please speak to your health care professional.

**ARMS - 1
Biceps**

With arms straight and fingers interlaced, raise arms up until stretch is felt.

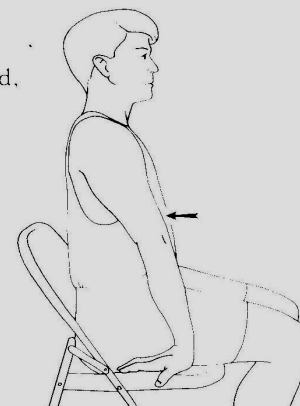


Hold ____ seconds.
Repeat ____ times.
Do ____ sessions per day.

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**ARMS - 3
Wrist Flexors / Biceps**

With palms flat and fingers pointing backward, slowly lean arm back until stretch is felt.



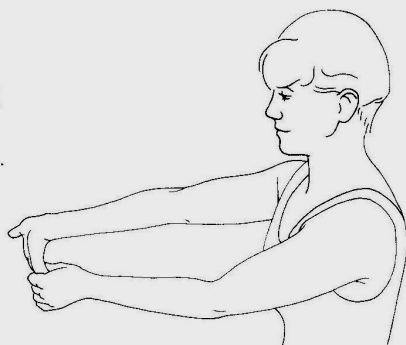
Hold ____ seconds.
Repeat ____ times.
Do ____ sessions per day.

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Flip hand over so palm is facing inward and stretch the back of the hand and wrist.

**ARMS - 2
Wrist Flexors**

Stretch arm out in front with elbow straight, palm facing away. With other hand, pull fingers backward until a stretch is felt over front of forearm.

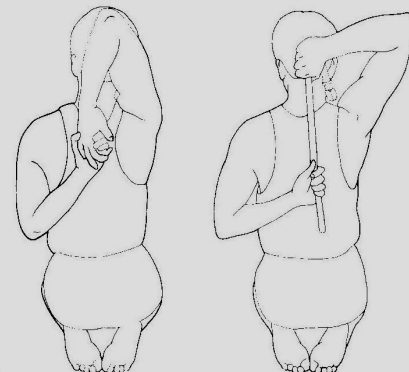


Hold ____ seconds.
Repeat ____ times.
Do ____ sessions per day.

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**SHOULDERS - 2
Rotator Cuff / Extensors**

Bring right hand over head and down as far as possible. Reach with left hand, palm facing out, around, up and grasp right hand. Belt may be used as a beginner aid. Grasp belt and work hands closer together. Repeat to other side.



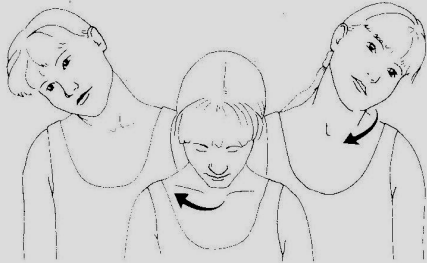
Hold ____ seconds.
Repeat ____ times.
Do ____ sessions per day.

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NECK - 8

Extensors / Flexors / Side Benders

From sitting position with back straight, slowly roll the head in a full circle.



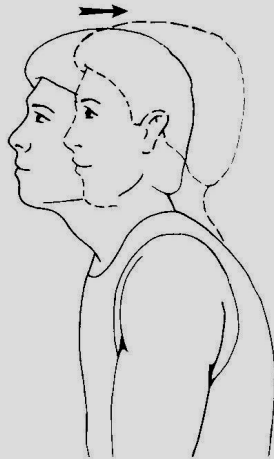
Hold ____ seconds.
Repeat ____ times.
Do ____ sessions per day.

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NECK - 1

Flexors

Pull head straight back keeping jaw and eyes level.



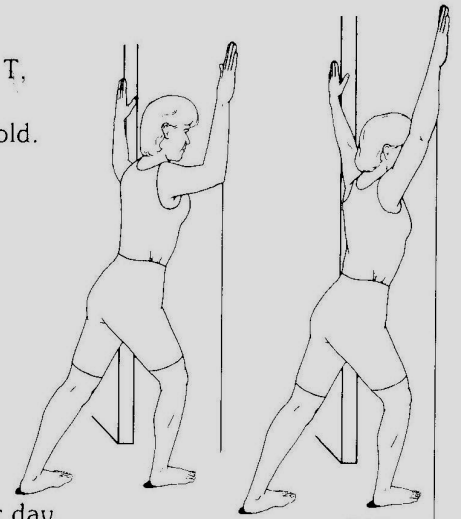
Hold ____ seconds.
Repeat ____ times.
Do ____ sessions per day.

©

CHEST - 6

Pectorals

With arms forming a T, lean forward until stretch is felt, hold. Slide arms up to form a V. Repeat the stretch.



Hold ____ seconds.
Repeat ____ times.
Do ____ sessions per day.

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About the Author:



Dawn Rockall is a local resident of Brampton and has been practicing as a Registered Massage Therapist since graduating from Sir Sandford Fleming College in Peterborough in 2002. Upon graduation, Dawn moved back to work in Brampton and had opened her own clinic here in Bramalea called Rockall Therapeutics.

Dawn continued her schooling, taking courses in Hot Stone Massage, Sport Massage, and Reiki. Furthermore, she studied Vichy Body Treatments & Vichy Massage in New York City and plans to expand her education in the near future to include Acupuncture, Cranial Sacral Therapy and Rolwing.

As a sport massage therapist, Dawn enjoyed being involved with sporting events such as marathons and triathlons where she prepared the athletes for their races as well as treating them thereafter.

Dawn also worked previously at a spa where she was given a lot of training in relaxation and its benefits. She also has experience working in hospitals with palliative care patients and the terminally ill.

Some of her personal hobbies and interests include exercising, running and spending time outdoors. Dawn does a lot of volunteer and charity work with the Cancer Society and Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto

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