

# **FACT SHEET: CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME**

MONTANA COALITION FOR EMPLOYEE FUNCTIONALITY SAFETY & HEALTH

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## **Facts About CTS**

- CTS is a growing problem. It affects approx. three percent of the general population and accounts for the 41% of all reported work-related repetitive motion disorders.
- Women account for 72% of all CTS cases.
- Approximately 73% of those suffering from CTS do not return to the same job and have to retrain or get a different job.
- Estimated medical cost and loss productivity per worker is \$29,000 (US).
- Work-related CTS and other musculo-skeletal injuries cost about \$40 billion (US) annually
- The first diagnosed cases of CTS were among meatpackers in the 1860s.

## **How is CTS Treated?**

- Rest and hand splint to reduce tendon swelling.
- Anti-inflammatory medicines.
- Carpal tunnel release surgery to release pressure on the median nerve.
- Those who have diabetes, thyroid disorder or other medical conditions should be treated differently.
- Prevention and screening of CTS at home and at work are the best strategy.

**For more information about CTS Screening,  
Contact Jack Sullivan at  
Community Medical Foundation for  
Patient Safety, 832-778-7777  
[www.communityofcompetence.com](http://www.communityofcompetence.com)**

## **What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?**

Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is a cumulative trauma disorder of the hands and wrist often caused by repeatedly performing stressful motions with your hands or holding your hands in the same position for long periods of time. CTS can strike anyone! Work-related cases are highest among the 20-to-40 age group and non-work-related cases highest among people in their 50s.

## **What Causes Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?**

The main cause of CTS is repetitive motions that stress the hands, such as extensive use of a computer keyboard and hand tools, small parts assembly, chopping, sewing, knitting, and sports activities involving hand movements and excessive vibration. The stress affects the sensitive nerves of the hands and wrists and the blood supply to the hands and wrists. Repetitive flexing and extension of the wrist may cause a thickening of the protective sheath surrounding each tendon. The swollen tendon sheaths apply increased pressure on the median nerve and produce CTS.

## **What are the Symptoms and Signs of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?**

- Tingling or pain in the injured hand, usually thumb, index, but may include the middle and ring fingers, or tingling in the whole hand. Symptoms may first occur at night.
- Numbness in the fingers.
- Cramping of the hand and wrist.
- Hands feel weak in the morning.
- Hands drop objects frequently.
- Difficulty buttoning a shirt, handwriting or opening a jar lid.
- Feeling swelling in fingers when there is no visible swelling.
- Weakness of the fingers when holding and squeezing an object.
- Difficulty telling hot from cold by touch.
- Difficulty tying shoe laces or picking up small objects.
- Muscle atrophy with mild weakness in the thumb.
- Pain from the hand shooting up as far as the shoulder.

## **What to Do if You Have Symptoms and Signs of CTS?**

Consult with your doctor about these symptoms and signs. There are several clinical tests to determine CTS. A new rapid, noninvasive screening test is now available to measure your motor and sensory functionality of your hands and to determine how well your bones, muscles, and nerves are working together. A problem with any of or a combination of these parts of your hands and wrist may indicate early onset of CTS. For more information about this new screening test, contact Community Medical Foundation for Patient Safety