

## **Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS)**

**Definition** - Condition caused by compression on the median nerve at the wrist. The median nerve is one of the 3 main nerve that control hand function.

**Causes** - It often occurs for no obvious reason, but a few conditions that increase the risk include diabetes, arthritis, obesity, pregnancy, thyroid disease, wrist injuries and repetitive use of the hands.

**Symptoms** - Typically starts with intermittent discomfort, mainly tingling or numbness on the hands at night. As time goes by, the symptoms start also occurring in day time, last longer and may spread to the forearm and upper arm. Weakness of the hand may also develop.

**Diagnosis** - In most cases the physician's interview and examination reveals the diagnosis. Nerve conduction test and EMG (electromyogram) are often needed to confirm the diagnosis, evaluate the severity and rule out other problems.

### **What do patients need to do?**

- Use wrist splints in the affected hand(s) particularly at night.
- Take B6 supplements.
- If possible avoid excessive grip and flexion of the hands.
- Loose weight (don't underestimate the importance of this.)
- Your doctors may recommend a short trial of anti-inflammatory therapy (if you have no contraindications.)
- Physical/Occupational therapy could be helpful.
- Injecting steroids into the carpal tunnel area may provide temporary relief.
- Surgery, if needed, is simple, safe and offer good results in >85% of patients. Should be consider if you have persistent numbness, weakness, muscle wasting or significant discomfort.
- Contact your doctors for changes in your condition.