DO YOU SUFFER FROM CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

Are you or do you think you may be one of the many Americans who suffer from Carpal Tunnel Syndrome? This is a painful, yet preventable and treatable condition when diagnosed. Take a moment to read the article below to see if you too could be suffering from CTS.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a common condition of the wrist and hand that can affect the use of the whole arm. It is caused by pressure on the nerve at the base of the palm (median nerve). Because of the physical demands of using the wrist and arm, carpal tunnel syndrome is common and affects nearly 1 in 20 Americans. Fortunately for most people who develop CTS, physical therapy can prove to be a huge help in relieving pain and numbness, restoring use of the hand wrist and arm without the need for surgery.

The *carpal tunnel* is a narrow channel on the palm side of your wrist. The tunnel protects the median nerve and the tendons that bend your fingers. Pain is caused by crowding or pressure of this nerve leading to carpal tunnel syndrome. CTS is most prevalent in jobs that require a lot of movement of the fingers including any machinery type jobs with machinery that tends to vibrate. Although key-board work is often associated with CTS, it is more frequent in assembly type jobs.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome will often be diagnosed in combination with your physical therapist and primary care doctor. Once evaluated by your physical therapist, a plan of care will be developed. This can include:

- Education regarding:
  - changing wrist positions (ie, avoiding prolonged bent wrist positions)
  - proper neck and upper back posture (ie, avoiding forward head or slouching)
  - safe use of sharp utensils, tools, or other implements, if sensory changes are identified
  - "stretch breaks" during your work or daily routine
  - Exercises to increase the strength of the muscles in your hand, fingers, and forearm—and in some cases, the trunk and postural back muscles
  - Stretching exercises to improve the flexibility of the wrist, hand, and fingers
  - Use of heat/cold treatments to relieve pain
Use of a night splint to reduce discomfort

Increasing the size of tool and utensil handles by adding extra material for a more comfortable grip

Anti-vibration gloves or anti-vibration wraps around tool handles, if vibration is a factor at your workplace

Of course, every individual is diagnosed and treated based on their individual symptoms and needs. At Head to Toe PT we pride ourselves on treating the individual, not just the injury, which means evaluating the whole body and lifestyle to determine what exactly could be causing your carpal tunnel flair-ups. If you are experiencing any of the symptoms described above, they can be treated by your PT. It is best to do so sooner rather than later to avoid painful surgery. Please contact Head to Toe PT or your primary care doctor to see how we can help you back to your pain free life!

*The majority of the above information is provided by the American Physical Therapy Association’s Move Forward web site. Please visit www.moveforwardpt.com for more information.