



Repetitive motion injuries

Repetitive motion injuries (RMIs) are also called repetitive strain injuries (RSIs). They result from doing the same activity over and over for a long period of time. This can be at work, at home, during sports, and/or with hobbies.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Signs and symptoms depend on the injury.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS)

- Thumb, index, middle, and ring fingers feel numb
- Tingling feeling in the hand(s)
- Pain is felt in the thumb and fingers. The pain may be worse at night. It can wake you up.
- Pain starts in the hand and spreads to the arm. The pain can even travel to the shoulder.
- The fingers swell. It feels like your fingers are swollen. Your hands feel weak in the morning.
- You have trouble holding on to things. You drop things.
- You have a hard time writing with a pencil or pen, opening a jar, buttoning a blouse, etc.



CAUSES

In general, RMIs are caused by repeated movements that involve:

- Drilling or hammering
- Lifting
- Pushing or pulling
- Squeezing
- Twisting
- Wrist, finger, and hand movements

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS)

Repeated motions, typing vibrations, etc. cause swelling of the tendons inside the carpal tunnel. This is the narrow tunnel in the wrist. The swelling puts pressure on the nearby nerves.

TREATMENT

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS)

This is easier to treat and less likely to cause future problems if it is found early. CTS can be treated with:

- Wearing a wrist brace, splint, etc. as advised.
- Over-the-counter medicines to reduce pain and swelling. Examples are aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen sodium.
- A physical therapist or occupational therapist can show you what exercises to do at work and at home to treat CTS.
- Cortisone shots in the wrist area
- Surgery, if needed





TRIAGE QUESTIONS



Do any of these problems occur?

- Severe or persistent pain, swelling, or spasm
- Tenderness or stiffness and limited motion in the affected area, such as the shoulder, arm, or wrist

NO **YES** ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Does pain in your hand, shoulder, etc. wake you from sleep?

NO **YES** ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



Have you had one or both of these problems?

- Pain, numbness, and tingling in your hand for more than 2 weeks
- You haven't been able to make a fist for a couple of weeks.

NO **YES** ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



Do you drop things often and does your thumb feel weak?

NO **YES** ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



USE SELF-CARE



SELF-CARE

- Keep your head upright and your ears, shoulders, and hips in a straight line.
- Keep your work within reach without having to stretch or strain your arms, shoulders, or back. Don't stretch to reach repeatedly.
- Change positions or tasks often.
- Use the proper tools for the job. Use tools made to reduce vibration and/or pressure.
- Manage symptoms with rest, ice, compression, and elevation (R.I.C.E.). Take over-the-counter medicine for pain.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS)

- Lose weight, if overweight.
- Apply ice and take an over-the-counter medicine to reduce the pain and swelling as directed.
- Avoid sleeping on your hands.
- Use a wrist splint to keep the wrist angled slightly back and the thumb parallel to the forearm.

Preventing Wrist and Hand Injuries

- Do not hold an object in the same position for a long time. Even simple tasks, such as hammering nails, can cause injury when done over a period of time.
- Give your hands a break. Rest them for a few minutes each hour.
- Lift objects with your whole hand or with both hands. Gripping or lifting with the thumb and index finger puts stress on your wrist.
- If your line of work causes pain in your hands and wrists, alternate the stressful tasks with other work.
- Exercise your hands and wrists as often as you can. Here are two examples:
 - Place your hands in front of you. Spread your fingers as far apart as possible. Hold for 5 seconds. Relax. Repeat 5 times with each hand.
 - Turn your wrists in a circle, palms up and then palms down. Relax your fingers and keep your elbows still. Repeat 5 times.