Risk Factors for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

by Ricker Polsdorfer, MD

En Español (Spanish Version)

A risk factor is something that increases your likelihood of getting a disease or condition.

It is possible to develop carpal tunnel syndrome with or without the risk factors listed below. However, the more risk factors you have, the greater your likelihood of developing carpal tunnel syndrome. If you have a number of risk factors, ask your doctor what you can do to reduce your risk.

Risk factors include:

Occupation

The vast majority of carpal tunnel syndrome cases are work related. People whose occupations involve repetitive work with the hands, such as keyboard operators, factory workers, typists, barbers, musicians, and vehicle drivers, are at increased risk. In addition, people who use vibrating tools, such as jack hammers, chain saws, chippers, grinders, drills, and sanders, for long periods everyday may be at increased risk.

Injuries

Wrist injuries, such as burns, broken bones, compression, or crush injuries, may increase your risk of developing carpal tunnel syndrome.

Medical Conditions

Having the following medical conditions may increase your risk of developing carpal tunnel syndrome:

- Arthritis
- Diabetes
- Raynaud's disease, which impairs blood flow in the hands
- Water retention from:
  - Heart failure
  - Kidney problems
- Hormone-related conditions
  - Pregnancy
  - Breastfeeding
  - Menopause
  - Hypothyroidism
  - Cushing's disease
  - Excess growth hormone
- Medications
  - Birth control pills
  - Cortisone pills or shots
  - Some high blood pressure drugs
- Tumors and cysts in the carpal tunnel

Age

Carpal tunnel syndrome is most often diagnosed between the ages of 40-60.

Gender
Women are diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome three times more often than men.

Genetic Factors

Inheriting a narrowed carpal tunnel increases your chances of developing carpal tunnel syndrome.

REFERENCES:


Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research website. Available at: http://www.mayo.edu/.

Last reviewed September 2011 by Lawrence Frisch, MD, MPH
Last Updated: 9/20/2011