

# Topic of the Week

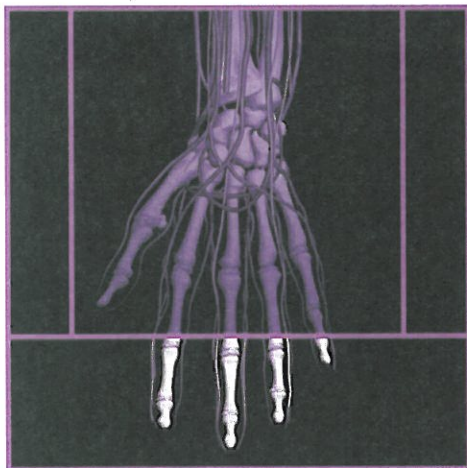
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WE CARE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

## Chiropractic Can Lend a Hand for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Presented by: **Mark J. Glesener, DC**

Your chiropractor is skilled at treating carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) - a painful condition involving the hand and wrist. Symptoms often include numbness, tingling, weakness, or muscle-wasting in the thumb and index finger. The fingers may also have a tendency to feel swollen, although no swelling is present. All of these symptoms are attributed to an irritation of the median nerve as it passes through the carpal tunnel.



The carpal tunnel is an opening in the wrist that allows for the passage of nerves, tendons and blood vessels that supply the hand. This opening is formed on one side by the carpal bones of the wrist, plus a connective tissue sheath called the flexor retinaculum on the other side.

Presented by:

Dr. Mark Glesener, Fox Valley Chiropractic  
1750 East Main Street, Suite 60, St. Charles, IL 60174, (630) 377-8844, (630) 037-8404  
drglesener@sbcglobal.net

Since the carpal tunnel is a physically limited space, any swelling or inflammation within this space will also cause compression of the median nerve. One of the most common causes of this compression is the inflammation of the tendons passing through the carpal tunnel. This irritation is usually associated with repetitive activities involving the small muscles of the hand, such as typing, knitting or sewing.

Although a person working at a computer station is thought to be the most prone to CTS, the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) estimates that assembly-line workers are three times more likely to suffer from CTS than data-entry personnel.<sup>1</sup> Women are also more likely to be treated for CTS, and NINDS suggests that this may be due to the fact they have smaller carpal tunnels than men.

Although a true case of CTS is attributed to the compression of the median nerve at the wrist, irritation anywhere along the length of this nerve can lead to symptoms that mimic this syndrome.



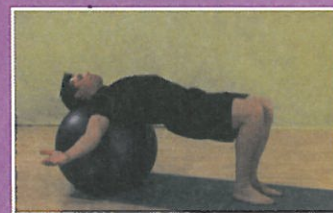
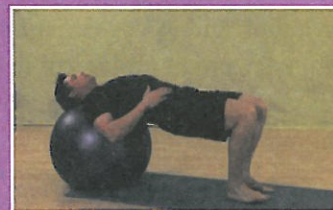
### Exercise of the Week

#### Balance Single Leg in Table Top Reverse Bridge Position

*(Consult your chiropractor before engaging in this or any other exercise.)*

Difficulty: High

Walk out to a table top position. Bring arms out to sides, and feet close together. Extend one leg straight out, keeping the thighs parallel. Hold position for 5-10 counts. Switch sides. Repeat 3-4 times per side.

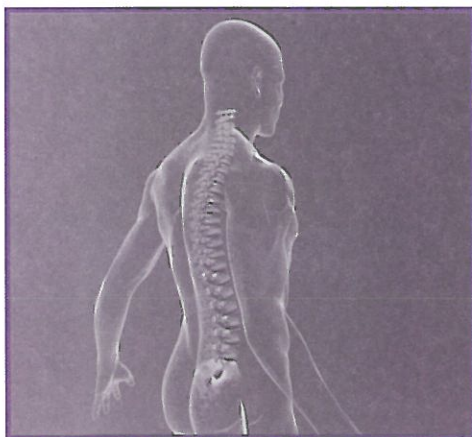


The median nerve leaves the spinal cord at the lower part of the neck, where it starts out as a series of nerve roots. These roots then unite to form part of the brachial plexus. The brachial plexus then divides into several more specific nerves, at which point the median nerve becomes distinct.

Vertebral subluxations can cause irritation and/or inflammation of the nerve roots, as they pass very close to the joints and discs of the neck.

The median nerve must also travel through or around several muscles on its way to the arm and hand. Specific muscles that can be involved include the scalene muscles of the neck, the pectoral muscles of the chest, and the flexor muscles of the forearm. Tightness or inflammation of any of these muscles may serve as a source of irritation to the nerve. If positions that stretch or tighten these muscles reproduce symptoms, it's likely that this could be contributing to CTS.

Chiropractors are specifically trained in the art of locating and correcting sources of nerve interference caused by irritation and joint restriction. Orthopedic and neurological tests are used to determine the source of irritation.



And chiropractic adjustments are used to restore proper mechanical function of the involved joints - including the wrist, elbow or cervical spine.<sup>2</sup>

When it comes to carpal tunnel syndrome, prevention of the problem is always recommended. You should...

- Make sure that your work station is ergonomically set up. It's one of the best ways to avoid improper posture and repetitive strain, both of which may contribute to CTS.
- Take regular breaks from repetitive movements.
- Stretch the muscles of the forearm, chest and neck.



Other factors shown to contribute to CTS include tobacco, caffeine and alcohol consumption.<sup>3</sup> Diabetics may also be more susceptible to experiencing CTS.<sup>4</sup>

If you start to feel the symptoms of CTS, ice the wrist several times a day to decrease inflammation in the area. Consult with your chiropractor to ensure that you have proper positioning and movements of the joints and to test whether there are other contributing factors besides the carpal tunnel. To stop the problem worsening, you may require splints or braces. Studies have shown chiropractic care to be an effective tool to reduce the symptoms of CTS.<sup>5,6</sup>

## Quote of the Week

"Get knowledge of the spine, for this is the requisite of many diseases."

-Hippocrates

For more health tips, visit online  
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## Topic of the Week

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Writer/Editor: David Coyne

Writer: Dr. Christian Guenette, DC

Design: Elena Zhukova

Photos: Fred Goldstein

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