Orthopaedic Connection

Carpal Tunnel? Maybe.

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

If a person is experiencing pain symptoms in the hand and wrist knowing their age is important in making a diagnosis. Of course the list of possibilities is long, but arthritis and carpal tunnel syndrome are at the top of the list.

Arthritis

Arthritis would usually begin between ages 40 – 50 whereas carpal tunnel can occur in patients in their 20s all the way up to the very elderly. There may be a history of injury to the wrist such as a fracture, but not always.

Pain in the hand and fingers is present and stiffness is prominent. The pain from arthritis tends to be present most of the time and probably increased with overuse. Ibuprofen or Tylenol can be used to decrease pain and aching.

I don’t find that bracing the arthritic hand and wrist helps that much, but it is worth a try.

The feeling of numbness and tingling are not part of the arthritis symptoms.

Carpal Tunnel

The symptoms in carpal tunnel are fairly consistent.

- Tingling and numbness present more at night.
- A hand/wrist brace often can control symptoms if worn at night.
- Diabetes is often associated with carpal tunnel.
- Driving a car causes numbness to increase.
- Moving the hand and wrist as in shaking it works temporarily often at night.
- It can come on at most anytime after age 25.
- Physical therapy can help a little, but is not curative.
- An outpatient surgical procedure to relieve pressure from the compressed nerve solves the problem.
- X-rays of hand and wrist are usually normal.
- An office nerve test is frequently ordered to confirm the diagnosis.

What Else?

- You can wait too long to have surgery which can cause nerve damage that surgery can’t fix.
- I don’t like to do carpal injections because the nerve can be damaged in the process.
- When I do operate on carpal tunnel I make a 1.5 inch incision in the palm and release the pressure on the nerve.
- You go home with sutures and a bandage that stays on for about a week.
- Carpal tunnel surgery is among the most successful surgeries Orthopaedic Surgeons do.

Hope you have a nice week. See you next time.

My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.
Office Website and Gratiot County Herald Archive

Wow! Your window to the Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal world opens at www.orthopodsurgeon.com. It contains the Website Library of information, Your Orthopaedic Connection and GCH archive of all previous articles.

You will be amazed at all the helpful information it contains.
All of the information pertains to everything I treat in the office and hospital.
Be well.

Dr. Haverbush