

# Articles by our Physical Therapists

## 8. CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

### CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a common condition treated at Baker Valley Physical Therapy. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) occurs when the median nerve, which runs from the forearm into the hand, is compressed or squeezed at the wrist. The median nerve conducts sensory information about the palm side of the thumb and index, long, and ring fingers, and it provides muscle control to some of the small muscles in the hand. When the median nerve is compressed in the wrist, the symptoms often include pain, numbness/tingling, and weakness in the hand. The pain may radiate into the forearm. Loss of dexterity, clumsiness, dropping things, etc., are also common complaints. CTS is caused by a variety of factors, not necessarily activity-related factors. Often, the problem is of genetic predisposition - some people's wrists are smaller than others and the nerve is compressed to some extent naturally. Then, additional activity-related factors may exacerbate the condition, including exposure to vibration, repetitive motions of the forearm, wrist, and hand, sleep position of the wrist, or trauma. Other factors may include high blood pressure, diabetes, age-related degeneration, and even cyst formation. Treatment for CTS should begin as soon as possible, before it reaches more severe stages, and with the direction of a physician. Surgery is often an effective treatment, but occupational and physical therapy can be used to address the environmental factors, provide splinting solutions, offer modalities to treat the symptoms, as well as exercises including stretching and strengthening. If surgery is used, OT/PT may help with scar management by providing soft tissue mobilization including ASTYM treatment.

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