

A SHOW OF HANDS

Autumn 2021

Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Bodywork Treatment Proves Successful

Cathy Ulrich

It started as a vague feeling of numbness in her thumb and first two fingers, then progressed slowly to a definite tingling that woke her several nights a week. "It's not so bad on weekends when I have a chance to rest my arms, but it's now getting in the way of things I like to do at home," says Marie, who spends long hours during the work week typing at her computer keyboard. "I love to knit and cook, and I've had to curb these activities, as well."

Diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome, Marie displayed the classic symptoms: soreness in her forearms, pain in her hands at the end of a long day at the computer, and a feeling of tightness that had spread from hands and wrists all the

the same way many times a day over a long period of time, she has literally worn out the tissues involved in that motion. This type of injury -- called a repetitive strain injury, or RSI -- creates tiny tears in the fibers of the soft tissues of the body. While they don't immediately cause loss of function, these micro-tears set up conditions for chronic inflammation that will eventually manifest as pain, soreness, tightness, tingling, and burning.

CTS

The hand and wrist combination work together as an amazing, mechanical anatomical wonder. Imagine a set of ropes and pulleys that travel from the

Have a Fang-Tastic Halloween!

-D



Working at a computer keyboard for long hours each day can bring on carpal tunnel syndrome.

way to her elbows. And recently, she'd been getting headaches.

Marie has a couple of different options for treating the problem. "My doctor tells me he can operate, but the surgery isn't always successful," she says. "He recommends I try bodywork first."

Because Marie does the same motion in

elbow through the wrist to the finger tips. The muscles reside in the forearm, moving the fingers via long tendons that run through channels in the wrist. The nerves that send and receive sensory and motor information from the brain run alongside the tendons through these same channels.

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Office Hours and Contact

HAND & HAND Mobile Massage
Tom Saulnier - CMT, ZBT
805-501-2011
handnhand5@yahoo.com
www.handnhand.biz
Mon. - Sat., By Appointment

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When bending or straightening a finger, these tendons slide back and forth, just like cables. When continually working at a keyboard and using the same motion in the same position thousands of times a day -- like millions of Americans do -- the cables begin to wear. And just like threads in a rope, some of the collagen fibers will tear. This process progresses until enough fibers are torn that the body develops inflammation in the tendons and sheaths. Swelling ensues, which pinches the nerves, producing the classic symptoms of tingling, swelling, and even loss of grip strength.

The Bigger Picture

The symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome may reveal an even bigger problem. The nerves that carry sensory and motor information to the hand arise from the spinal cord in the neck, travel under the collar bone, through the armpit and elbow, all the way to the wrist. A nerve can become entrapped at the neck, shoulder, elbow, or wrist, and an impingement in any of these places can have a cumulative effect on the tingling felt in the hands. These entrapments are usually caused by poor postural habits. The soft tissues become shortened around habitual positions of rounded shoulders and forward head from working long hours at the computer and the channels where the nerves travel through the shoulders and arms can close down. Sound familiar?

Can Bodywork Help?

A recent study conducted at The Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami School of Medicine looked at the efficacy of bodywork in treating carpal tunnel syndrome. Researchers found that after the completion of four massage sessions, the participants experienced an improvement in grip strength and a decrease in pain, anxiety, and depression. Participants also showed improvement in specific medical tests used to diagnose carpal tunnel syndrome.

This landmark study verifies what bodyworkers have observed clinically for years: Massage -- and especially deep tissue techniques, such as neuromuscular therapy, Rolfing, and Hellerwork -- can reorganize the connective tissue fibers, break up scar tissue, and reduce or eliminate the cause

of inflammation. Soft tissue work helps realign these tiny fibers of the tendons and sheaths, and the body can then heal itself -- and ease or even eliminate carpal tunnel syndrome.

Bodywork to the entire arm, shoulder, and neck will also free soft tissues where hidden tightness can contribute to the problem. Soft tissue inflammation can travel through the continuous connective tissue framework from fingertips to head and even cause headaches -- as was the case with Marie. Massage can restore these tissues to normal function.

Other Considerations

In addition to bodywork, it's important to evaluate postural habits, work station positioning, and movement patterns. When workers become so focused on their work that they forget their bodies, they tend to maintain positions that

contribute to the cause. It's important to identify several ways and several positions to accomplish the same thing. Moving the mouse from one side to the other, even during the same day, can help prevent fatigue and tissue failure. Wrist rests and keyboard trays are important, and a regular stretching routine is essential.

Finally, along with exercise and good nutrition, include bodywork as part of your regular health maintenance program. Regular massage reduces connective tissue inflammation and prevents scar tissue from forming. Movement education, such as the Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method, structural integration, and Trager Approach can help correct postural issues that also contribute to the problem. Bodywork is a treatment of choice to keep carpal tunnel syndrome from slowing you down.



Massage and bodywork can help mitigate the symptoms of repetitive stress injuries, like CTS.

Skin Care Through Changing Seasons

Keep your skin looking and feeling great

With the change in season, many people will begin to notice a difference in the way their skin looks and feels. Many people find that as we move closer to winter, their skin becomes more dried out and flaky. The good news is there are things you can do to keep your skin looking good as the seasons change.

"Winter approaching doesn't mean your skin has to look dull and dry," says Katherine Goldman, celebrity esthetician/waxologist and owner of the Stript Wax Bar. "It also doesn't mean you have to turn to chemicals in an effort to maintain some of your tan throughout the fall and winter. There are much better options available to everyone who wants to take advantage of them."

Here are some tips that can help keep skin looking and feeling great as the seasons change:

- Dull skin can be countered by having regular facials. Facials remove dead and flaky skin and help restore a natural glow. They give skin an overall healthier appearance.

- When winter approaches, it is important to moisturize the skin so it doesn't become dried out. After cleansing, follow with an anti-aging serum and apply a good quality moisturizer.

- Bypass the chemical tans that come in take-home spray bottles and lotions. They usually contain chemicals you should avoid putting on the skin and will most likely not provide the natural tan look most people seek. Tanning booths also have risks, so opt for an organic spray tan instead

- Go to a waxologist for hair removal, so skin irritation and problems can be avoided. Having hair professionally waxed will keep the skin smooth and unblemished.

- Drink plenty of water to maintain youthful cells. If the skin doesn't get enough water, it will look aged and dehydrated.

- Eat foods like strawberries, tomatoes, salmon, edamame, tea, carrots, broccoli, and avocado, which have nutrients that help protect the skin and

keep it looking great.



Keep your skin looking great all winter long.

Hot or Cold for Injuries?

How to Know Which is Best for You

Art Riggs

We all know that treating an injury immediately after it happens can help minimize the pain and damage as well as facilitate recovery. But after rolling your ankle in a soccer game, or hurting your back when lifting your toddler, or tweaking your knee when stepping out of your car, what's best? Should you ice it to try to control inflammation, or would heat be better to promote circulation?

While it's difficult to establish a fail-safe rule for when to apply ice or heat, the general directive is to use ice for the first forty-eight to seventy-two hours after an acute injury and then switch to heat.

It Depends

The reality is that many conditions are not necessarily the result of a specific injury. I call these conditions "recurrent acute" and find them by far the most

common: sciatica that occurs when you drive a car; a back that flares up every time you garden; or tennis elbow from intense computer work. In these cases, consistent and frequent applications of ice may prove very helpful over long periods of time, particularly immediately after experiencing the event that causes problems.

Conversely, back or other muscle spasms caused by overexertion rather than injury may benefit greatly from heat immediately upon the onset of symptoms or immediately after exercise in order to relax the muscles and increase circulation. Also, muscle belly pain not resulting from acute and serious trauma generally responds well to heat, which can break the spasms and release the strain. On the other hand, nerve and tendon pain--regardless of

the duration of symptoms, even if you've been experiencing them for months--benefit from ice.

What Works for You

The bottom line: different individuals will constitutionally vary greatly in their reactions. Some people are more prone to the types of inflammation exacerbated by heat, while others find their bodies contracting and tightening at the mere mention of ice. Try each option and pay close attention to how your body and mind respond, and let your gut be your guide. Ultimately, what works best for you is, well, what's best for you.

*A vacation is
what you take
when you can no
longer take what
you've been
taking.*

-Earl Wilson

Welcome to "MASSAGE U."
Today's Subject: Happy Holiday Season

With all the chaos in the world and the never-ending threat of Covid-19, I'd like to pause for a moment to wish you all a very SAFE and HAPPY Holiday Season. Whatever you celebrate, wherever you are, be with loved ones, be respectful, be understanding and be supportive. We've all been through a lot and now more than ever we need togetherness.

From our home to yours, Happy Holidays!

For more information or to schedule a session, please call or visit mobilehands.biz. In Good Health!

Note: The preceding information is not medical advice. Please check with your doctor prior to starting any new health, exercise or nutrition plan - especially if currently under a doctor's care or if you have any pre-existing medical condition(s).

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1464 Madera Road N-251
Simi Valley, CA 93065



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