



Carpal Tunnel

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What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a condition that occurs when your median nerve, the nerve that travels through a narrow passage within your wrist, becomes compressed. The median nerve is one of the main nerves in your hand and is responsible for providing feeling in your thumb and all fingers, except the pinky. It is also responsible for maintaining strength in the hand (the muscles at the base of your thumb). This nerve travels down your arm, passes through the carpal tunnel in the wrist, and ends in the hand.

What causes carpal tunnel syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome results when the tissues of the narrow tunnel become inflamed, squeezing the median nerve and limiting blood flow within the nerve. As a result of this pressure, your fingers and hand can feel numb and weak. You can also develop pain, especially when you move your arm and hand a certain way. Many people that have carpal tunnel syndrome also have difficulty grasping objects and are prone to dropping things because of hand weakness and inability to gauge grip pressure. While anyone can develop carpal tunnel because of the natural structure of their wrist, you are more likely to develop the condition if you are over 40 or have diabetes. Contrary to popular belief, computer use is not directly related to most cases of carpal tunnel, and people of many different occupational and recreational backgrounds may develop this condition. Carpal tunnel can become more symptomatic with co-existing inflammation or injury (e.g. wrist fracture). You can also develop carpal tunnel due to hormone-related changes that occur during pregnancy and menopause.

How does surgery help with carpal tunnel syndrome?

If more conservative treatments, such as wearing wrist splints or having steroid injections, aren't enough to alleviate carpal tunnel-related pain and weakness, you may be a good candidate for surgery. Dr. Hung offers carpal tunnel release surgery, performing the procedure on an outpatient basis. She can perform either traditional open surgery or a minimally invasive endoscopic carpal tunnel release that uses a smaller incision at the wrist crease.

In either procedure, Dr. Hung cuts the roof of the carpal tunnel in your wrist to open the passage and relieve pressure on the median nerve.

In the minimally invasive surgery, also known as an endoscopic carpal tunnel release, Dr. Hung can reach the carpal tunnel using only one 1 cm incision and specialized surgical tools, including a tiny camera. This camera helps her to see the interior structures of your wrist up close, allowing her to perform the surgery effectively and safely. As endoscopic surgery requires smaller incisions and less trauma to your body, you can heal faster and experience less pain than with open surgery. Return to work is about two weeks faster than the traditional open technique.