



## **Cumbria Advisory Thyroid Service**

### **INFORMATION SHEET**



### **CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME – AND THE THYROID?**

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a painful condition of the hands and wrists. Very basically it is a trapped nerve (the Median nerve) caused by unwanted fluid settling in the wrists.

The condition is not only painful in the wrist area, it can also be felt upwards towards the elbow and more particularly around the thumb and in the fingers. It is one of the many related symptoms and conditions in hypothyroidism, diabetes and various other arthritic illnesses. It is generally named tendonitis. Another common name for the condition is Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI). This is where the build up in the wrist is caused by using machinery such as computer keyboards constantly and for too long.

It has been found that Carpal Tunnel Syndrome can be a problem with climatic changes, very warm or very cold weather.

Managing the condition can be quite complicated depending on the degree of pain and disability. It is not unknown for both hands and both wrists to be affected at the same time and naturally this is a serious condition to deal with.

The usual medical treatments consist of pain relieving non steroid anti-inflammatory drugs, strong painkillers such as codeine type analgesics and cortisone injections. Whilst the final hope is of a possible cure, unfortunately without a guaranteed success rate, is an operation. Other methods used to alleviate the pain are to keep the arms raised on pillows while sleeping. You should always raise your arms above your head for a few moments before getting up. Ice packs and hot packs can be used to reduce swelling and pain during the daytime, splints will help to give more pain free movement in the hands.

The Carpal Tunnel Syndrome sufferer must always remember to go carefully when taking hot cups of liquids, picking up objects like glass milk bottles or similar slippery objects. For those with mobility difficulties and needing the use of their hands to grip crutches or rails, they must always be aware and recognise that hand strength is considerably reduced due to the pain etc.

A method of pain alleviation is to take physiotherapy, where the physiotherapist may give pain relief with ultra-sound treatment, and possibly suggest the afore mentioned heat or cold packs, plus appropriate exercises to maintain and hopefully regain some strength in the hands.

In general this is a condition which cannot be managed totally alone, you must consult your G.P. and take whatever measures offered, consistent with your medical condition. It may be a good idea to ask for another TSH level blood test (blood test for thyroid function) as this will ascertain that your current dosage of thyroxine is adequate. In some cases, but not all, when Carpal Tunnel Syndrome crops up, it may indicate there is a drop in T4 levels.....so it is always as well to have this checked out.

Fortunately Carpel Tunnel Syndrome is not usually an ongoing permanent condition. It tends to come in phases lasting for something between 2 to 4 weeks before the pain begins to dissipate and allows you to resume normal activities. If this condition becomes a regular feature in your life and disrupts your normal living and working practices, then it may be necessary to consider surgery, to hopefully cure or at least reduce the painful condition, and make it more bearable. Related trapped nerve problems occur in the neck, back and the feet – again these are medical conditions that need to be, and must be, medically treated by your own G.P.

## **C.A.T.S RECOMMENDS YOU ALWAYS SEEK YOUR DOCTORS ADVICE**

### **Disclaimer**

*The purpose of this information leaflet is to help those suffering with thyroid disease. Whilst every effort is made to provide accurate information, it is impossible to ensure that the information given is relevant to every individual. No responsibility is accepted by CATS and it is recommended and essential, that if in any doubt about your condition, that you should always contact your doctor, specialist physician or surgeon to seek medical advice.*