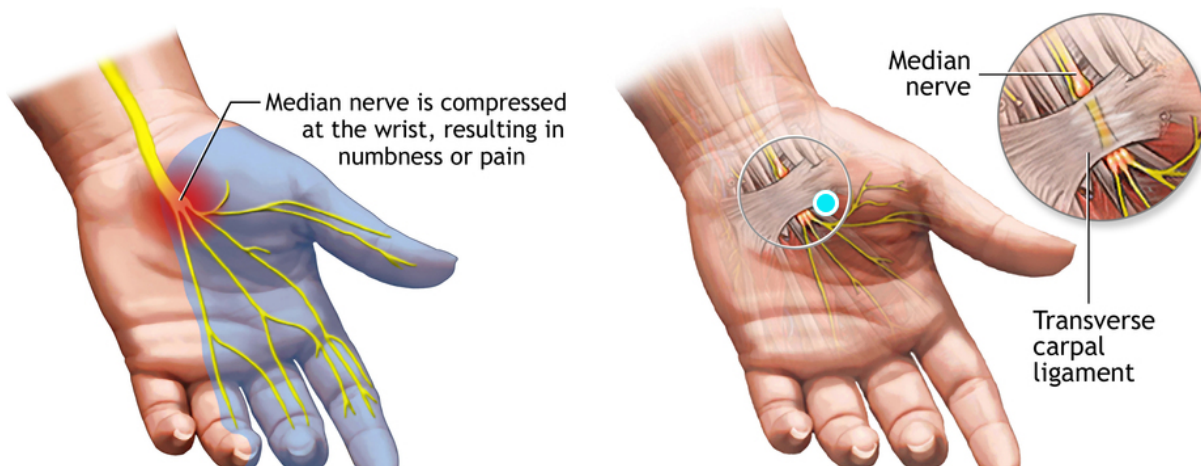


# Carpal Tunnel Syndrome



Carpal tunnel syndrome is caused by the blood supply to the nerve becoming compressed within the Carpal Tunnel at the wrist. This nerve (the Median nerve) provides sensation to the thumb, index, middle and part of your ring finger; it also supplies to a group of small muscles at the base of your thumb. It is one of the main nerves in the hand.

The carpal tunnel is formed of a group of small bones and across the top holding it together is a tight ligament. The tendons and your median nerve which bend your fingers and thumb run through this space. If the blood supply to the nerve gets squashed then the nerve stops working properly. This is often worse at night or during the day if you work with your hand elevated a lot; such as driving or holding up a book. There are many causes of carpal tunnel syndrome but in most cases it is not clear why it occurs.

## Symptoms

The symptoms that occur include pins and needles, which usually affect the thumb and sometimes up to three fingers in the hand. If the blood supply is compromised over a long period of time then pain or burning in the same fingers can occur together with weakness of grip. In severe cases you can see wasting of the muscles that the nerve supplies as the messages from the nerve are blocked.

## Treatments

**Night splint** - You can buy carpal tunnel splints easily online or at the chemist. They will help with the pins and needles at night by maintaining the blood supply to the nerve.

**Injection** - An injection of steroid into the tunnel can provide good relief. This should be tried before thinking about surgery. You can have several injections with little side effects.

**Surgery** - The surgery involves an incision down your palm. The ligament or roof of the tunnel is cut to allow more space. If you have permanent numbness or weakness this may take a long time to get better and may never fully recover.