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Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

In Carpal tunnel syndrome, the median nerve, which runs from the forearm into the hand becomes pressed or squeezed at the wrist resulting in pain tingling or numbness in the hand and wrist sometimes radiating up the arm. It is the most common and widely known of the entrapment neuropathies in which the body's peripheral nerves are compressed or traumatised.

What are the symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome?

Symptoms usually start with paresthesias (tingling or itching or numbness) in the palm of the hand and the fingers, specially the thumb and the index and middle fingers. The symptoms often first appear in one or both hands during the night and later tingling during the day relieved by shaking or massaging hands.

What are the causes of carpal tunnel syndrome?

Most cases of CTS are of unknown cause.

It can be associated with any conditions that causes pressure on the median nerve at wrist eg Obesity, Hypothyroidism, Arthritis, Diabetes and Trauma.

Other causes include benign tumours such as lipomas, ganglion, vascular malformation Some speculate that CTS is provoked by repetitive wrist movement and manipulating activities esp seen in carpenters, butchers, grinders, factory workers, packers, cashiers, computer operators, dentist and drilling machine operators.

How is the carpal tunnel syndrome diagnosed?

A typical history and physical examination with positive Phalens and Tinels test suggest carpal tunnel syndrome. It is confirmed by doing EMG-NCV study. Ultrasound and MRI of wrist can sometimes be useful.

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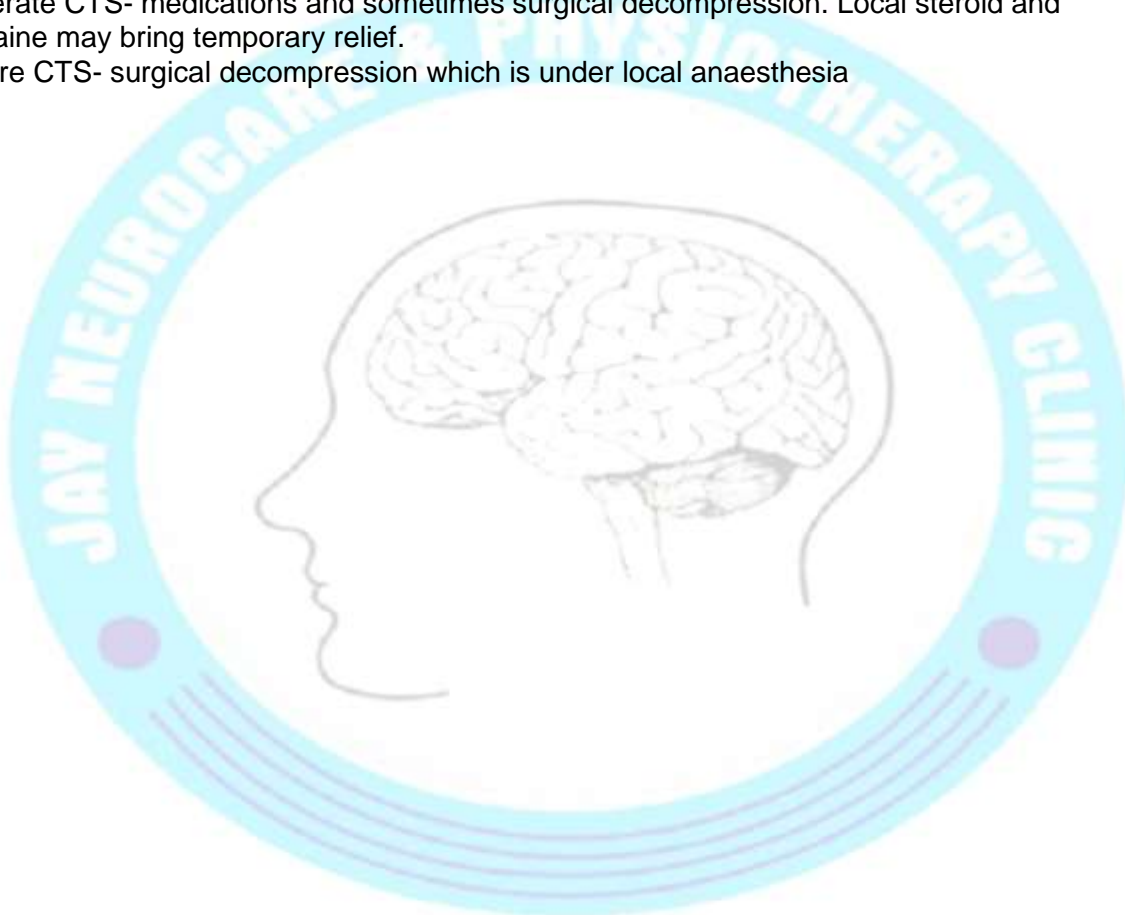
How is carpal tunnel syndrome treated?

Treatment depends on the cause and severity.

Mild CTS- splinting and changing habits may be sufficient

Moderate CTS- medications and sometimes surgical decompression. Local steroid and lidocaine may bring temporary relief.

Severe CTS- surgical decompression which is under local anaesthesia



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