



eSafetyLine

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Another very common and very painful injury on a jobsite is carpal tunnel syndrome. This injury is caused, in large part, by how the hand is built. There is a narrow passageway in the wrist called the carpal tunnel. This passageway is surrounded by bone and other parts of the wrist. It is very important because this is where the tendons that attach the muscles of the forearm to the bones of the fingers and the nerve that controls ALL hand movement are located.

Through frequent, forceful and repetitive hand movements the tendons of the hand become inflamed and swollen. When the tendons swell they take up more room in the tunnel leaving less room for the nerve. This causes the nerve to get squeezed- this is carpal tunnel syndrome. The pressure on the nerve leads to pain, tingling or numbness in the hand, wrist or arm. These symptoms are often felt at night. If carpal tunnel syndrome isn't treated the hand can weaken permanently making it very difficult to grasp things like tools or use the hand at all.

Treatment is determined by how severe the symptoms are; less severe or early symptoms can usually be treated without surgery while more severe or longer lasting symptoms may need surgery. Common nonsurgical treatments include: a wrist splint to help minimize the stress on the wrist, changing or avoiding activities that cause symptoms, taking frequent breaks from repetitive tasks and learning ways to protect your joints as you go through your daily activities. These treatments tend to be a challenge for someone that uses their hands for a living.

Prevention is probably the best way to limit the impact of carpal tunnel syndrome on your life. Workers can do on-the-job conditioning exercises, including stretching exercises, take frequent rest breaks, and wear splints when necessary to keep wrists straight.

Another important means of prevention that is often overlooked is to use correct posture and wrist position while using tools, this helps to decrease the stress on all the structures of the wrist and hand. Wearing fingerless gloves can help keep hands warm and flexible to help reduce muscle stress and strain. Workstations, tools and tool handles, and tasks can be redesigned to enable the worker's wrist to maintain a natural position during work. Many employers are beginning to incorporate many of these prevention tips into their workday practices to help try to keep their employees safe.

Discussion Questions

What are some of the nonsurgical treatments for carpal tunnel syndrome?

Why does the structure of the hand and wrist lead to carpal tunnel syndrome?

MEETING / TRAINING ATTENDANCE ROSTER

COMPANY: _____

_____ SAFETY MEETING

JOB/DEPT: _____

_____ SAFETY TRAINING

DATE: ___/___/_____

TIME: _____

TOPICS ADDRESSED: _____

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURES

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: _____

ACTION TAKEN: _____

Supervisor's Signature

___/___/___
Date

Safety Coordinator's Signature

___/___/___
Date