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**I DON'T DO ANY KEYBOARDING WORK.
WHY DO I HAVE CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME?**

Jeffrey A. Rodgers, M.D.

Contrary to popular belief, the primary cause of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is **NOT** the use of a computer keyboard. Most cases have no single identifiable cause. On the other hand, there is a host of risk factors that can increase your risk and usually most people have more than one risk factor.

Believing that a job activity is the sole cause of this problem is most often incorrect and hinders recovery. In doing so, the patient assumes no responsibility in both the development of the problem and in the process of getting well.

The Multiple Causes of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome occurs when the pressure in the Carpal Tunnel puts pressure on the median nerve at the wrist and causes numbness, tingling and pain. The following is a list of known factors that increase risk for the development of the disorder:

Risk Factors for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Systemic Factors	Anatomic/Activity Factors	Lifestyle Factors
Diabetes	Female	<i>Smoking</i>
Rheumatoid Arthritis	Fracture of the wrist	<i>Obesity</i>
Gout	Tumors in canal	<i>Alcohol abuse</i>
Hypothyroidism	Repetitive forceful grasping	<i>Poor aerobic fitness</i>
Pregnancy	Keyboard (minor)	
Hemodialysis		
Age > 40		

While patients cannot control many of the Systemic or Anatomic/Activity related risk factors, there remain several Lifestyle Factors that are in their control. A recent study suggests that “Wellness” interventions in the workplace that target these factors do decrease the incidence of work-related carpal tunnel syndrome.

Understanding the factors that contribute to the development of symptoms from carpal tunnel syndrome allows us to educate the “injured worker” and hopefully encourage them to assume some responsibility for their wellness. I hope that this approach can result in more predictable results for patients who do eventually require surgery.

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