

# Your Journey with Carpal Tunnel Syndrome



For more information scan this QR code or go to [myhealth.alberta.ca/carpal-tunnel-syndrome-pathway](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/carpal-tunnel-syndrome-pathway)

**Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common condition that affects one of the nerves (median nerve) in your hand and wrist. Pressure on median nerve within the carpal tunnel may result in pain, burning, numbness, tingling, and/or weakness in your hand and wrist.** You are the most important part of your healthcare team. This guide will help you to know what to expect as you work with your team to manage and treat your carpal tunnel syndrome. If you have any questions along the way, please ask your team. Click on the page numbers in blue if you want more information about the step in your journey.

## Before your appointment ([page 6](#))

- Write down how you feel, and your questions, symptoms, and concerns.
- Write down things that you find make your symptoms better and worse, and what you have tried to manage your symptoms.
- Consider bringing a family member or friend to support you.



## Visit your healthcare provider ([page 8](#))

- Share all of your symptoms and concerns. Your health includes physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and social elements.
- In order to better manage your health condition, your healthcare provider needs to hear from you and understand who you are and what matters to you.
- During your visit with your healthcare provider, they may use tests like Tinel's sign, Phalen's test, and Durkan's test to see if and where symptoms happen.



## Get your tests ([page 11](#))

- Some people may be sent for electrodiagnostic studies or an ultrasound.



## Review your test results ([page 12](#))

- If blood work is ordered to assess for other conditions, you may find your results on MyHealth Records or MyAHS Connect ([myhealth.alberta.ca/myhealthrecords](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/myhealthrecords)).
- You can ask your healthcare provider to share your results with you (e.g., electrodiagnostic study results).



## Review your treatment & management options ([page 13](#))

- Explore the different treatment options:
  - Wrist splints
  - Changes to your activities
  - Steroid injections
- You and your healthcare provider may decide that you should think about having surgery for your carpal tunnel syndrome.
- Decide what will work best for you.



## Talk with your healthcare provider about a referral ([page 16](#))

- Non-surgical options (e.g., splints, activity modification) are usually tried first to see if they help with your symptoms.
- Referral to a specialist is based on your symptoms, impacts on your day-to-day life, how you respond to non-surgical treatment, and your test results.



## Start your treatment & watch your symptoms ([page 17](#))

- Take an active role in your treatment.
- Write down any changes you notice in your symptoms.
- Pay attention to worsening numbness/tingling/pain in your hand/fingers, and if you experience increased difficulty using your hand (e.g., doing up buttons, holding a fork, etc.).



## Keep taking care of yourself ([page 18](#))

- Keep taking care of your overall health.
- Look for other healthy lifestyle resources and supports.



Whole-person health ([page 2](#))

### Important Tips:

#### Need a family doctor?

[ahs.ca/findadoctor](https://ahs.ca/findadoctor)

#### Need a translator?

Let your healthcare provider know

#### Need health advice?

Call Health Link at 811

#### Need to find programs and services in your community?

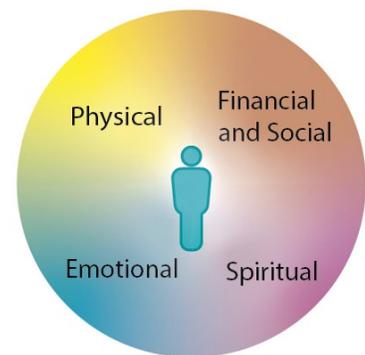
Call 211 or visit [ab.211.ca](https://ab.211.ca)

## Whole-person health

The whole-person health approach will help you and your healthcare team better manage your health condition. It is drawn from the teachings of the medicine wheel.

Whole-person health means thinking about all parts of your health and wellness: physical, financial and social, spiritual, and emotional. All of these parts are connected and influence each other. It's important to be aware of your personal needs in each part and to share that information with your healthcare team.

- **Physical:** your specific health conditions and how well your body works
- **Financial and Social:** your ability to meet your housing, transportation, food, and health needs, feeling supported to manage your daily life, and having meaningful relationships
- **Spiritual:** your beliefs, sense of connection, and purpose
- **Emotional:** how you think, feel, and cope with life events



**Whole-person health**

Whole-person health also reminds us that we are all connected and work together: you, your support systems, and your healthcare providers. Your healthcare providers could be your doctor, nurse practitioner, or a team that comes together with you to plan and organize your care.

Your healthcare provider needs to understand who you are and what matters to you. This helps to build trust. But it can be hard to know what to share or what to say. Try starting by asking yourself:

**“What are the things in my life that are important to me?”**

**“What are the things in my life that may be affecting my health and well-being?”**



Continued on next page.

Here are some examples of things you may want to talk about with your healthcare provider:



### **Physical**

“My symptoms are making it hard for me to do my job.”

“Because of my pain and how hard it is for me to move around, it’s hard to take care of myself.”

### **Financial and Social**

“I’m worried I won’t be able to get to all of my appointments.”

“I need my daughter with me as a translator.”

“I’m not sure how I will pay for my medications this month.”

### **Emotional**

“I’m lonely and have no one to talk to.”

“I have a lot of stress and I’m not sure how to manage it.”

“Ever since my friend died, I’ve been struggling with my feelings.”

### **Spiritual**

“It’s important that I follow traditional healing practices.”

“How can I include my culture’s foods and family recipes in my nutrition plan?”

“It’s important that my religious practice of fasting is respected and brought into my care.”

## What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common condition that affects one of the nerves (median nerve) in your hand and wrist. The median nerve travels from your forearm to your hand and part of the nerve passes through the carpal tunnel (made up of bones and ligaments on the palm side of your hand). Pressure on median nerve within the carpal tunnel may result in pain, burning, numbness, tingling, and/or weakness in the hand and arm (Figure 1). Usually, symptoms are felt in the thumb, index finger, middle finger and part of the ring finger (not in the little finger). The median nerve also supplies the thenar muscles (muscles at the base of the thumb) and in cases of more severe carpal tunnel syndrome, the thenar muscles can get weaker and smaller (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 1: Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

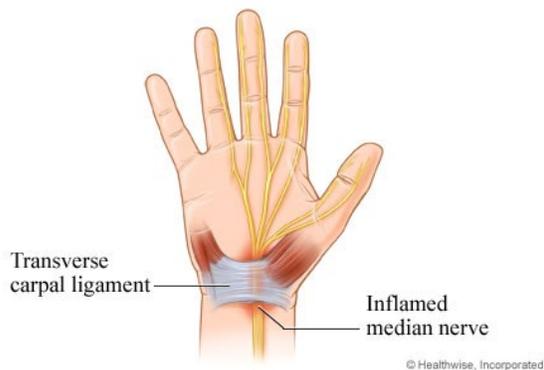


Figure 2: Areas supplied by the median nerve. The median nerve supplies feeling to the skin of the thumb, index finger, middle finger, and half of the ring finger. The median nerve also supplies the thenar muscles which enable you to move your thumbs.

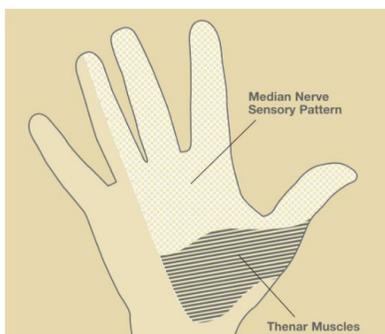


Image from American Society for Surgery of the Hand

Figure 3: Thenar muscles and severe carpal tunnel syndrome. Note that the thumb muscles in the palm of the right hand are shrunken.



Image from e-hand: The Electronic Textbook of Hand Surgery

There are a few factors that can make a person more likely to develop carpal tunnel syndrome. For example:

- Women are more likely to develop carpal tunnel syndrome than men
- Risk of carpal tunnel syndrome increases with age
- Having some other medical conditions can increase risk for carpal tunnel syndrome (e.g., diabetes, hypothyroidism, and some types of arthritis)
- Pregnancy (symptoms usually go away after delivery)

Symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome may have a small or big impact on things that you do in your day-to-day life. If you notice symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome, it is important that you talk with your healthcare provider as soon as possible so that they can support you to manage the condition. Early intervention can help reverse carpal tunnel syndrome or keep it from getting worse.

Understanding the symptoms that you experience and their impact on your life helps your healthcare team determine whether you have mild, moderate or severe carpal tunnel syndrome.

| Mild/Moderate   | Severe  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pain and tingling in the hand, wrist, and fingers (may also feel symptoms in the arm)</li> <li>• First notice hand and wrist symptoms when you wake in the morning</li> <li>• Symptoms may be experienced on and off (e.g., only during certain activities)</li> <li>• Clumsiness/dropping objects</li> <li>• You may be able to relieve your symptoms by shaking out your hand and wrist</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symptoms are constant or occur very often</li> <li>• Symptoms greatly impact your life and the things you can do</li> <li>• Weakness in the hand that affects your ability to do things</li> <li>• Tingling/loss of feeling in hand</li> <li>• Symptoms wake you up at night</li> <li>• Changes in how the muscle at the base of your thumb looks (e.g., muscles get smaller)</li> </ul> |

## Before your appointment

Everyone will have their own unique journey with carpal tunnel syndrome. How you move through your journey, the number of visits with your healthcare team, the steps you will take, and the order you take them in will depend on your individual needs and will be decided in partnership with your healthcare team. Always follow the specific recommendations from your healthcare team.

Here are a few tips to help you get ready for your appointment with your healthcare provider:

- Consider using a symptom tracker to write down important information to share with your healthcare team about your symptom(s).
- A symptom tracker can help you remember what symptom(s) you're feeling, when it started, how often it happens, how long it lasts and what makes it better or worse.
- **Common symptoms you may have with carpal tunnel syndrome are:**
  - **Numbness and tingling in the wrist, hand, and fingers. These symptoms are often noticed first when you wake up in the morning but may occur at other times as well.**
  - **Pain in the wrist, hand, and fingers.**
  - **Having trouble doing fine motor tasks (e.g., doing up your buttons, opening jars).**
  - **Feeling clumsy with your hands (e.g., dropping things).**
- It can sometimes feel uncomfortable to discuss things that one finds difficult to do or can no longer do. This may include tasks like doing up buttons or holding a fork. Your healthcare provider knows it can be hard to talk about these things and they are there to support you. Seeking support early can help make management easier and may help reduce the need for surgery. Your health care provider may also recommend that you see an occupational therapist who can support you to complete your day-to-day tasks.
- Write down a list of your questions and concerns. When you're done, read your list and mark the most important things.
- Make a list of the prescription and non-prescription (over the counter) medicines you use, including any vitamins, herbs, creams/ointments, and supplements.
- Ask someone you trust to go with you to your appointment. They can help you ask questions, write down instructions, and remember explanations.



## Helpful tools and resources

To get the most out of your visit, plan to write notes during the visit or see the Alberta Health Services My **Care Conversations app** ([ahs.ca/careapp](https://ahs.ca/careapp)) website for more information about recording your conversation with your healthcare provider.

**Use a symptom tracker:** [hqca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/HOCA-Symptom-Tracker-March-23-2022.pdf](https://hqca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/HOCA-Symptom-Tracker-March-23-2022.pdf)



Your healthcare provider will review your history of symptoms and what tends to make your symptoms better and worse. They may ask how often, how long, and how severe your symptoms are. They may also ask how your symptoms impact the things you do every day like taking care of yourself, your job, the things you like to do (e.g., hobbies), and your sleep.

### What should I share with my healthcare provider?

- What impact are carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms having on things that are important to you, like your job, hobbies and interests, and relationships?
- What activities make your carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms worse?
- What has worked for you in the past to manage your carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms?
- There are many conditions that may contribute to carpal tunnel syndrome (e.g., diabetes, arthritis, hypothyroidism). Talking with your healthcare provider about your overall health is important. This will help your healthcare provider identify and manage any other conditions which may help with your carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms.
- Let your healthcare provider know if you are pregnant. Carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms are often experienced during pregnancy due to fluid retention (most often during the later stages of pregnancy). Pregnancy related carpal tunnel syndrome usually resolves after pregnancy.
- What types of things help you work better with your healthcare team and what do you expect and need from the relationship with your healthcare provider?

### Assessments your healthcare provider may do

There are a few simple assessments that your healthcare team may do to help determine whether you have carpal tunnel syndrome.

#### Examination of your arm, wrist, and hand

- Your healthcare provider can tell a lot by looking at your arm, wrist, and hand.
- They will look for any injuries, underlying conditions that may be causing your symptoms and any signs that need follow up (e.g., changes in the muscle at the bottom of your thumb).
- Your healthcare provider will ask you about where you feel your symptoms and what impact they have on your life.

#### Tinel's Sign

- Your healthcare provider will tap firmly on the area on your wrist over the median nerve to see if and where symptoms (e.g., numbness, tingling, pain) occur.
- Your healthcare provider will discuss the test results with you right away.

### Phalen's Test

- Your healthcare provider will ask you to put the backs of your hands together (Figure 4). This increases the pressure in the carpal tunnel. They will ask you what symptoms you experience during the test.
- Your healthcare provider will discuss the test results with you right away.

Figure 4: Phalen's Test



### Durkan's Test (also known as Carpal Compression Test or Median Compression Test)

- Your healthcare provider will apply pressure over the area on your wrist over the median nerve to see if and where symptoms (e.g., numbness, tingling, pain) occur.
- Your healthcare provider will discuss the test results with you right away.

Figure 5: Durkan's Test



### What should I watch for (symptoms of concern)?

Contact your healthcare team if you have:

- Redness and warmth that could indicate infection
- Any symptoms that develop quickly (in less than a week)
- Severe symptoms that don't go away like numbness, pain, or weakness
- Changes in how the muscles in your wrists and hands look

**You are the most important part of your healthcare team:** If you don't understand what your healthcare team is telling you, let them know right away. Be open and honest.

You might say:

**“This is new to me. Could you please explain it slowly, using language that is easier to understand?”**

**“It sounded like you said that I should... Did I understand that correctly?”**

**“Can you show me a picture or model to help me understand?”**



## Helpful tools and resources

- Making the most of your appointment: [myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?Hwid=hw226888](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?Hwid=hw226888)
- Working with your healthcare team: [hqca.ca/for-patients-and-families/working-with-your-healthcare-team](https://hqca.ca/for-patients-and-families/working-with-your-healthcare-team)



You may also need tests to help find the cause of your symptoms, evaluate the severity of your carpal tunnel syndrome, and to rule out other health problems. These may include:

### Blood Tests

- Blood tests are not usually ordered for carpal tunnel syndrome.
- Your healthcare provider may ask you to have blood work done to see what may be causing your carpal tunnel syndrome or to rule out other conditions.

### Electrodiagnostic Studies

Depending on your symptoms, your healthcare provider may ask you to go for electrodiagnostic studies. Electrodiagnostic studies can help confirm the carpal tunnel syndrome diagnosis, measure how severe your carpal tunnel syndrome is and provide information about how you might respond to surgery. Nerve conduction studies are the primary electrodiagnostic study done for carpal tunnel syndrome.

**Nerve conduction studies:** Two electrodes are taped to the skin over the wrist and finger and a small electrical current is passed through the median nerve to see how electrical impulses are transmitted in the carpal tunnel. If you have carpal tunnel syndrome, the impulses will be slowed. Although everyone's personal experience may be different, most people report that nerve conduction studies are not too uncomfortable, and the test is very quick. Needles are not usually used in nerve conduction studies.

### Ultrasound

Your healthcare provider may ask you to get an ultrasound of your wrist done. The ultrasound allows your healthcare provider to see what the inside of the carpal tunnel looks like and if there might be additional pressure on the median nerve. An ultrasound is a painless test. A gel is placed on the wrist and a device is used to touch and scan the area.



## Review your test results

It is important to know what your test results are and what they mean for you personally. Take time to discuss your results with your healthcare provider. Medical terms can be hard to understand. And even common words like “positive” or “negative” might mean something different for medical tests. Ask your healthcare provider for explanations and examples to make sure you fully understand.

You might ask:

**“What does this mean for me?”**

**“Is there a current concern? If so, what is it?”**



## Helpful tools and resources

See your results and health information using secure online tools. You will need to sign up for an account.

### **MyHealth Records**

See your lab results, immunizations, and some other results with a MyHealth Records account. Sign up at [myhealth.alberta.ca/myhealthrecords](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/myhealthrecords).

### **MyAHS Connect**

See your health information, manage your Alberta Health Services appointments, and interact directly with some members of your healthcare team. Ask your healthcare provider how to access your MyAHS Connect account. Learn more at [ahs.ca/myahsconnect](https://ahs.ca/myahsconnect).





## Review your treatment & management options

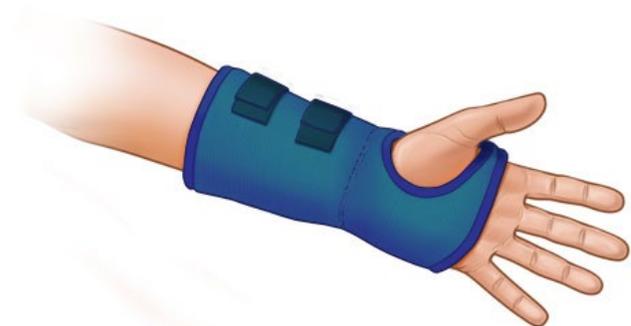
There are a few treatment options available for carpal tunnel syndrome. Many of these treatments can be done at home. For some people, symptoms may resolve in about 6 months (especially if you are under 30 or have not had carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms for very long).

Wrist splints (Figure 6) are often used to help manage carpal tunnel syndrome. Healthcare professionals usually recommend that splints be worn while you are sleeping and when doing activities that make your carpal tunnel symptoms worse. Splints work by supporting the wrist in a neutral position (not bent). It is important that you choose a splint that is long enough to support the wrist in a neutral position. Your healthcare provider may recommend when (e.g., only at night) and how long to wear your splint. Wrist splints can be purchased at the pharmacy and the cost for splints may or may not be covered by private insurance plans. If cost is a concern, talk with your healthcare provider, they may be able to help. Most people do not mind wearing a wrist splint but if the fit and feel of your splint makes it hard for you to wear, let your healthcare provider know as they may have other options available.

### Tips about wrist splints:

1. The splint should be about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> the length of the forearm and should not cover your thumb or fingers
2. The splint should be comfortable enough to sleep in
3. The splint should be snug but should not leave red marks on your hand or arm when removed
5. The wrist splint should feel secure and prevent any wrist movement. You should still be able to move your fingers normally.

Figure 6: Wrist splint



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## Changes to your activities

Your healthcare provider will ask you if you notice any activities that make your symptoms worse. You will be asked if you can minimize or eliminate these activities. If you cannot make changes (e.g., the activity is required to care for yourself or for your job), let your healthcare provider know and they may be able to offer additional supports (e.g., use of ergonomic equipment to help support how you do activities) or may change the approach to your treatment.

## Steroid injections

Local corticosteroid injections work by decreasing swelling and inflammation. This treatment can help reduce pain and increase your ability to use your hands for a period of time. Steroid injections are most effective when accompanied with lifestyle changes (e.g., stopping/minimizing activities that increase carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms). Steroid injections can sometimes be done by your primary care provider in their office or you may be referred to a specialist for ultrasound guided steroid injections.

Your healthcare team will monitor how much symptom relief you get from the injection and how long any relief lasts. If symptoms do not improve or return after a single (1) steroid injection, other treatment options should be considered. Patients should not receive more than three carpal tunnel steroid injections in their lifetime as this is unlikely to improve symptoms long term and may delay other treatments leading to more permanent damage.

If you are going for surgery, it is important that you not have a corticosteroid injection for at least a month before your surgery as it may impact your body's ability to heal.

## Medications

Medications are not usually used to treat carpal tunnel syndrome as they may cover up symptoms and delay treatment. Sometimes medications are used to help manage pain once a decision has been made that you will be going for surgery. Your healthcare provider may discuss this option with you.

## Surgery

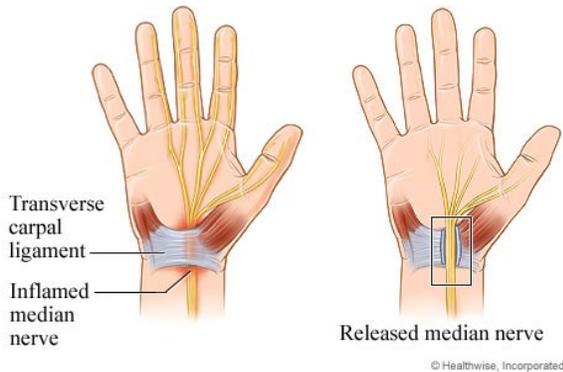
You and your healthcare provider may decide that you should consider having surgery to treat your carpal tunnel syndrome. Surgery may be a good consideration if you have had symptoms for a long time, if other treatments haven't helped, if your tests show that you have nerve damage, or if your symptoms impact your day-to-day life significantly.

The surgery for carpal tunnel syndrome is called a 'Carpal Tunnel Release' (Figure 7). This surgery is done to release pressure on the median nerve within the carpal tunnel. During the surgery, the surgeon will cut the ligament that forms the top of the carpal tunnel to release pressure on the median nerve. If you are referred to a surgeon, they will go over what you need

to do to prepare for the surgery, what happens during the surgery and what your recovery will look like.

Your recovery: [Carpal Tunnel Release: What to Expect at Home \(myhealth.alberta.ca\)](https://myhealth.alberta.ca)

Figure 7: Carpal Tunnel Release Surgery



### Other treatments

The use of alternative therapies have not been proven to effectively treat carpal tunnel syndrome. Alternative therapies may include: Active release therapy, thermal therapy, transcutaneous electrical stimulation, shockwave therapy, low level laser, massage therapy, and acupuncture [1] [2]. In addition:

- Patients often have to pay out-of-pocket for these therapies.
- Relying solely on these treatments to relieve carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms may unnecessarily delay proven medical treatment.
- Delays in accessing proven care can lead to additional irreversible damage to the median nerve.

### How to make the right decision for you

Asking the following questions can help you make an informed decision about your different options and decide what will work best for you:

**“What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?”**

**“Can I use any of these options together?”**

**“How will each option make me feel? Will it have side effects?”**

**“What results can I expect?”**





## Talk with your healthcare provider about a referral

Not all patients with carpal tunnel syndrome need a referral to see a specialist. Depending on your symptoms, your history and test results, you may need a referral to a specialist. You can find out more about the referral criteria for a specialist by asking your healthcare provider.

You may be referred for:

- (1) Ultrasound guided steroid injection: You may be referred to a neurologist, physiatrist (also known as a physical and rehabilitation medicine specialist) or radiologist for ultrasound guided steroid injection.
- (2) Electrodiagnostic studies: You may be referred to a physiatrist or neurologist.
- (3) Ultrasound: Diagnostic imaging is usually done at a local clinic.
- (4) Carpal tunnel release surgery: There are a few surgical specialists who can perform a carpal tunnel release. You may be referred to a plastic surgeon, neurosurgeon, orthopedic surgeon or a general surgeon with special training in conditions of the hand and wrist.

At all necessary steps along your journey, your specialist will meet with you to discuss your health concerns and look at your test results. The specialist may diagnose your concern, order more tests, or discuss treatment and management options with you.



### Helpful tools and resources

To learn about how to prepare for your specialist appointment, visit [ahs.ca/quire](https://ahs.ca/quire)





## Start your treatment & watch your symptoms

As you try the treatment options you chose, remember that if something doesn't work the way you thought it would, think about other options and connect with your healthcare provider to find a treatment that will work for you. Your healthcare provider will want to see you regularly (every 8-12 weeks) to see how the treatment is working and if any changes need to be made.

Remember to watch for and let your healthcare provider know right away if you notice:

- Redness and warmth that could indicate infection.
- Any symptoms that develop quickly (in less than a week)
- Severe symptoms that don't go away like numbness, pain, or weakness
- Changes in how the muscles in your wrists and hands look

Watching your symptoms is important. Call your healthcare provider or Health Link at 811 if you have any concerns. You might feel like you don't want to bother your healthcare team, but no detail is too small to share. If it matters to you, it will matter to your healthcare team.

You can clarify with your healthcare team what to expect in terms of follow-up communication. Call your healthcare team whenever you:

- Have questions
- Notice your symptoms getting worse
- Have problems with your medicine
- Haven't gotten test results or heard back about an appointment in the time you had agreed to



### Helpful tools and resources

If you can't reach your healthcare provider and need health advice or information, call Health Link anytime, day or night, by dialing **811**.





## Keep taking care of yourself

There are many different things that can impact your health and wellness. It is important to be able to work with your healthcare team to decide what is best for you, in your life, given your own unique circumstances as you manage your carpal tunnel syndrome.

Remember, you don't need to do everything all at once. Take realistic and manageable steps in your health and wellness. Consider why making a change may benefit you and the things that matter to you.



### Helpful tools and resources

#### Find resources and services in your community:

211 helps Albertans find the right resource or service for whatever issue they need help with, at the right time. 211 is available anytime, day or night, by phone, text, and online chat. It is confidential and available in over 170 languages over the phone. To contact 211:

- Call 211
- Text INFO to 211
- Visit [ab.211.ca](http://ab.211.ca)

Workshops, classes, and services from the **Alberta Healthy Living Program** can help you to improve your health and quality of life with a chronic condition: [ahs.ca/ahlp](http://ahs.ca/ahlp)

**Chronic Disease Management support:** [ahs.ca/cdm](http://ahs.ca/cdm)

**Health Information & Tools:** [myhealth.alberta.ca/Pages/HealthInfoToolsDefault.aspx](http://myhealth.alberta.ca/Pages/HealthInfoToolsDefault.aspx)



## Resources

There's lots of information out there, and it can be confusing to know what information is accurate and true. Here are some great resources that may be helpful for you.

### **Carpal Tunnel Syndrome:**

- [CTS: Care Instructions \(myhealth.alberta.ca\)](https://myhealth.alberta.ca)
- [CTS: What is it? Symptoms, Causes, & Treatment | The Hand Society \(assh.org\)](https://assh.org)

### **Pregnancy and Carpal Tunnel Syndrome:**

- [Pregnancy: Carpal Tunnel Syndrome \(alberta.ca\)](https://alberta.ca)

### **Decision making supports:**

- [Making a decision about carpal tunnel syndrome \(NHS\)](https://nhs.uk)
- [Carpal tunnel syndrome: Treatment options \(choosingwiselycanada.org\)](https://choosingwiselycanada.org)
- [Carpal Tunnel Syndrome: Should I Have Surgery? \(myhealth.alberta.ca\)](https://myhealth.alberta.ca)

### **Get help now:**

- Emergency: Call 911
- Health Link: Call 811

### **Mental health, addiction, and crisis support:**

- [Addiction Helpline](https://addictionhelpline.ca): 1-866-332-2322
- [Mental Health Helpline](https://mentalhealthhelpline.ca): 1-877-303-2642
- Crisis Text Line: Text CONNECT to 741741
- Crisis Services Canada: 988  
or visit [talksuicide.ca](https://talksuicide.ca)

### **Community and social supports:**

- Alberta 211: 211, or visit [ab.211.ca](https://ab.211.ca)
- Family Violence Info Line: 310-1818, or visit [alberta.ca/family-violence-find-supports.aspx](https://alberta.ca/family-violence-find-supports.aspx)
- Income Support: 1-866-644-5135, or visit [alberta.ca/income-support.aspx](https://alberta.ca/income-support.aspx)

### **Alberta Health Services programs:**

- Home Care: [ahs.ca/homecare](https://ahs.ca/homecare)
- Find a Dietitian: [ahs.ca/nutrition](https://ahs.ca/nutrition)
- Spiritual Care Services: [ahs.ca/spiritualcare](https://ahs.ca/spiritualcare)

### **Primary care (family doctors and nurse practitioners):**

- Find a doctor: [ahs.ca/findadoctor](https://ahs.ca/findadoctor)
- Virtual care guide: [ahs.ca/virtualhealth](https://ahs.ca/virtualhealth)

### **Helpful tip**

If you can't print this resource at home, ask a family member, friend, or your healthcare provider to print it for you. You can also use a computer and printer at your local library.

**Patient concerns and feedback:**

- Office of Alberta Health Advocates: [alberta.ca/office-of-alberta-health-advocates.aspx](http://alberta.ca/office-of-alberta-health-advocates.aspx)
- Alberta Health Services Patient Relations: 1-855-550-2555, or visit [ahs.ca/patientfeedback](http://ahs.ca/patientfeedback)

## Important phone numbers

Name or clinic name:

Phone number:

Name or clinic name:

Phone number:

Name or clinic name:

Phone number:

## Notes

Use this space to take notes.

### **About this Pathway**

The AHS Provincial Pathways Unit co- developed this patient pathway in partnership with patient and family advisors, primary and specialty care providers in Alberta. It is current as of May 2024.

### **Authors & Conflict of Interest Declaration**

This pathway was reviewed and revised by a multi-disciplinary co-design team including plastic surgeons, orthopedic surgeons, neurosurgeons, physiatrists, and primary care providers from across Alberta.

### **Pathway Review Process**

Primary care pathways undergo scheduled review every two years, or earlier if there is a clinically significant change in knowledge or practice. The next scheduled review is May 2026. However, we welcome feedback at any time. Please email comments to [albertapathways@ahs.ca](mailto:albertapathways@ahs.ca).

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### **Disclaimer**

This pathway represents evidence-based best practice but does not override the individual responsibility of healthcare professionals to make decisions appropriate to their patients using their own clinical judgment given their patients' specific clinical conditions, in consultation with patients/alternate decision makers. The pathway is not a substitute for clinical judgment or advice of a qualified healthcare professional. It is expected that all users will seek advice of other appropriately qualified and regulated healthcare providers with any issues transcending their specific knowledge, scope of regulated practice or professional competence.

## References

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