

## Carpal tunnel syndrome: treatment options

Use this **Option Grid™** decision aid to help you and your healthcare professional talk about how best to treat carpal tunnel syndrome.

| Frequently Asked Questions<br>↓                                 | Splinting and exercises  | Local steroid injection   | Surgical release  |
|---|--|---|---|
| <b>What type of treatment is this?</b>                          | A splint holds your wrist in a position to reduce the pressure on the nerve. It is used for six weeks or so. | A small amount of steroid is injected into your wrist to reduce swelling and pressure on the nerve.                             | Surgery is done on the palm side of your wrist. Tissue is cut to reduce pressure on the nerve.  |
| <b>For whom does this treatment work best?</b>                  | For mild to moderate symptoms, e.g. problems noticed during sleep  | For mild to moderate symptoms, e.g. problems noticed during sleep   | Surgery is the most effective treatment for moderate and severe symptoms, e.g. problems noticed continuously.   |
| <b>What are the advantages of this treatment?</b>               | Least expensive, easy and safe   | Convenient because it can be done during a normal appointment. Most patients improve for up to 4 months or more.                | Surgery provides long-term improvement for about 95 in every 100 people (95%).  |
| <b>What are the disadvantages of this treatment?</b>            | Wearing a splint can be inconvenient. The relief is often only for a short period.                           | Steroid injections provide relief but the problem is likely to come back.   | You may need to stop working for a few weeks. If you've had the problem for a long time, the nerve may be too damaged to recover, and you might continue to have weakness and numbness. |
| <b>What are the risks?</b>                                      | No risks   | Problems are rare. The injection can be painful, give you worse numbness as well as a temporary tingling sensation in the hand. | Up to 5 in every 100 people (5%) may have some remaining problems. Sometimes the pain, numbness or weakness, persist or worsen.   |
| <b>How long before I can use my hand again?</b>                 | No delay   | You can usually return to work the day of the injection.  | Typically, it takes a week or more until you can use your hand again.   |
| <b>How soon do the symptoms come back after this treatment?</b> | You may be free of symptoms for up to 3 months or more.  | You may be free of symptoms for up to 4 months or more.   | Symptoms do not come back very often.   |

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