



# ITS ALL IN THE WRIST

- DR. SARGON BENJAMIN ODISHO -

- ▶ **NEXT TO THAT WEIRD GUY IN THE CUBICLE NEXT TO YOU, WRIST PAIN IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON COMPLAINTS IN THE WORK PLACE. CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME (CTS) TO BE EXACT. ANY REPETITIVE HAND MOVEMENT OR WRIST-WRENCHING ACTIVITY LIKE TYPING, WRITING, OR EVEN CERTAIN SPORTS (TENNIS, GOLF, ETC.) MAY LEAD TO ACHES AND PAIN IN THE WRIST AND HANDS. IN ADDITION, SOME PEOPLE ARE JUST "DEALT A BAD HAND" AND HAVE WRISTS THAT ARE SUSCEPTIBLE TO PAIN DUE TO THEIR PARTICULAR ANATOMY. HERE'S A LITTLE GUIDE TO HELP YOU DECIPHER IF YOU ACTUALLY HAVE CTS (COMMON DIAGNOSIS FOR ANY AND ALL WRIST PAIN), EFFECTIVE NATURAL TREATMENT, AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PREVENT CTS.**

CTS results from excessive pressure placed on the median nerve by other structures as they pass through the carpal tunnel (made up of carpal bones and a tough circular fibrous band of tissue at the wrist). Pressure usually arises from swelling of the surrounding soft tissue or poor circulation (as also seen in certain conditions like diabetes, obesity, and other glandular or metabolic ailments) or history of trauma (old fractures or dislocations). The swelling of these tissues de-

creases the amount of room in the tunnel and therefore squeezes the median nerve. Squeezed nerve equals pain. Other symptoms characteristic of CTS include numbness, tingling, and/or loss of grip in the palm and thumb-middle/ring fingers. Since the nerve supplying the ring-pinky fingers doesn't pass through the carpal tunnel, pain here is usually the result of a musculoskeletal issue further up the arm. CTS patients might also complain of pain shooting up the arm to elbow, but again this is likely due to issues stemming from an impingement anywhere from the neck down the arm.

The fix is easy, alleviate the swelling and manage the activities that cause the pain. Ultrasound, muscle stimulation, acupuncture, and/or kinesioteaping are all very effective treatments for CTS. These treatments help reduce swelling and pain in the wrist. For some patients, diet and nutrition can also help alleviate the swelling due to poor circulation or hydration (especially important for pregnant women who are more vulnerable to CTS). Next, fix the culprit. Depending on the sport or workplace, little changes in equipment or workstation can make a world of difference to your wrists. Work site ergonomics, sport swing re-training, or even changing the equipment you use are also a vital part of my treatment protocol. Useful information that will prevent patients from re-injuring their wrists.

Although not a fix, splinting can also be utilized to manage the pain. Patients should only use wrist splints when performing strenuous wrist activities or at night. Reason being is looping an elastic strap over your wrists for a long period of time, which are already swollen to begin with, only adds to the problem.

Only severe cases or patients with a history of previous wrist traumas (like fractures, or failure of previous conservative treatments) should warrant a surgical consult. CTS takes some time to heal so patients that require return to activities immediately (if you're either a competitive athlete or you used up your last sick day for the Cubs opener) should ask their healthcare provider about the



## PRAYER STRETCH TO HELP PREVENT WRIST INJURY

following treatment options. Steroidal injections into the wrist may bring quick relief from pain, but it's often temporary. Surgery for CTS involves releasing the pressure in the carpal tunnel by cutting and loosening the fibrous band. Again, quick relief but the long term success of this treatment versus a more natural approach is a little hazy at best. These treatments will get you back in the swing of things but are not likely to make the problem go away. These precautions and a little TLC will get your pain-free wrists back to work, sports, or whatever in no time.

Finally, some friendly advice for those of you shaking your wrists out while turning the pages of this magazine. Stretch your wrists. Two easy stretches include puffing your hands together like your praying and bringing your elbows out until your forearms are parallel with the ground, and doing the same with the back of your hands (reverse praying hands). Heat wrists before activities and ice after (20 minutes at a time). Finally, it wouldn't hurt to drink more water.

Always offering a helping hand.

**Dr. Sargon Benjamin Odisho**